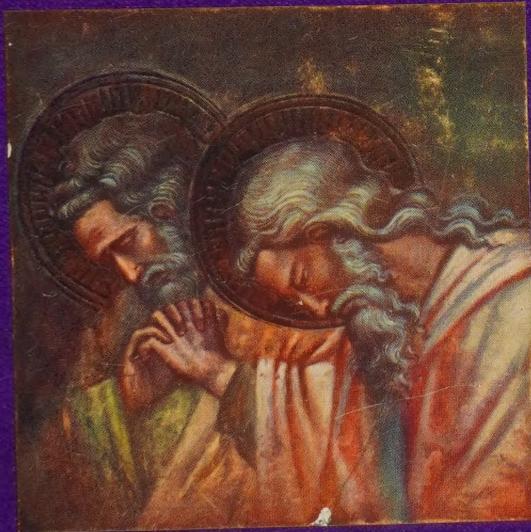




AND FRIENDS



THE KINSEY FOLK



BY R.C. GILLIE



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REPORTS TO YOUTH UNIT

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AND FRIENDS OF JESUS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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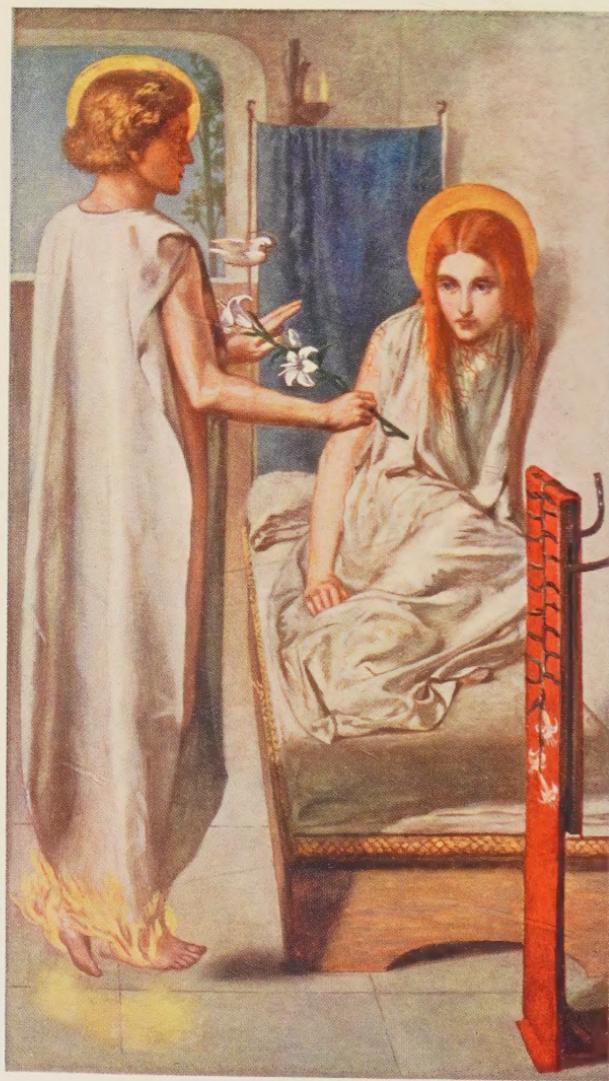
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THE ANNUNCIATION

A facsimile in miniature of the original picture by
DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI in the Tate Gallery,
London. Painted 1850.

*297 B3.45.5.2
1906*

THE KINSFOLK AND FRIENDS OF JESUS

BY R. C. GILLIE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF STORI."

*With illustrations from stock
University College Cork*

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1903

To
THAT TELLER OF STORIES
AND
LOVER OF CHILDREN
MY FATHER

P R E F A C E

THIS book is a sequel to *The Story of Stories*, but may be used independently. It aims to present, in a fashion attractive to children, vivid, and as far as possible, complete sketches of the companions of the Central Figure of the Gospels. It is thought that there is room for such a volume for two reasons.

Considerable experience in teaching and addressing children has convinced the author that even those who have a fair knowledge of the story of the Gospels frequently regard the lesser characters as little better than lay figures, and scarcely think of them as living beings, who changed and developed under the influence of our Lord. This book endeavours to give a clear outline and the colour of life to the members of His apostolic circle in the confidence that as they

emerge into distinctness, the Master of them all will make a new impression of reality upon young readers.

Secondly, the only part of the New Testament in which many intelligent children are interested is the Gospels. As a consequence, the transformation of the Apostles through our Lord's resurrection and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit is unnoticed, and the Epistles remain sealed books. This volume is intended to convince the child-mind that the heroes of the Book of Acts were once the weak disciples of the Gospels, and to make the whole of the New Testament interesting and intelligible, by interweaving into the narratives the statements and hints of a personal character which are found in the Epistles.

To secure the interest of cultivated children by all legitimate means has been the author's foremost desire. At the same time, the wider aspects of apostolic activity, so far as they can be understood by children, have not been neglected, and an effort has been made to anticipate the difficulties and questionings which inevitably arise at a later period. These diffi-

culties have not been directly mentioned, but, simply by the method of narration, they have been lightened as much as possible, if not removed.

This book makes no pretensions to originality, save in its plan and in the setting of the incidents in the most suitable manner for children. Many volumes have been in the author's hands while writing it, and if here and there echoes of the words of others are found unindicated by references, it is simply because of the unfitness of adding footnotes to a book for children.

The illustrations have been chosen with care, partly because of their beauty and in some cases because of their unfamiliarity. It is believed that children cannot be too soon encouraged to appreciate the best in sacred art and to look for the spirit of a picture behind the outward details, possibly inaccurate.

The author's hearty thanks are due to the Rev. R. K. D. Horne for assistance in revising the proof-sheets, and to his wife for her help in choosing the illustrations, and in many other ways.

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*All the Illustrations in this Volume
were engraved, and those in colour
printed, at the Menpes Press,*

The Kinsfolk and Friends of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

HIS MOTHER.

WHEN Jesus opened His eyes upon the world, the first face He learned to know was that of His mother Mary. Hers, too, was the first voice that grew familiar to His ears as she crooned Him to sleep with the Psalms she had by heart, and which we can still read. From her lips He first heard the story of God's ancient people, the story of Abraham and Moses and David.

Everyone cared for Him, for He was brave and good, and quick to do kind things, but His mother loved Him best of all. She was His first friend, and when few dreamed of His being different from His fellows, she was thinking silently of His future greatness, that came nearer

with the passing days. Let us try to learn from what is written of her what the mother of our Lord was like.

We are not certain that her face was beautiful. Perhaps you would have passed her by in the street of Nazareth, and would not have turned your head to look again if you had met her going with her pitcher to the well. But once you had looked carefully and had learnt to read what was written in her face, you would never have grown weary of the lovely things you found there—trustfulness, self-forgetfulness, humility, patience, courage. When the angel had told her that she was soon to be the mother of the long looked for Saviour, though she knew that she was called to a path of suffering and misunderstanding as well as high honour, she answered quietly, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word.” From that day the beauty of her soul shone yet more clearly, for she had surrendered herself perfectly to God’s will.

Though she is the most honoured of all women, we cannot say that she was learned. She had not been taught the wisdom of studious

folk who read much, and write, and travel. Perhaps she had never learnt to read at all, but she possessed the deeper and more wonderful wisdom of those who are so pure in heart that they can hear God speak, and when they hear, only care to do His bidding. Though she came of the royal race of David, and her ancestors had ruled over Israel, she was but a peasant girl in Nazareth, where women were taught little, if at all ; and where few were rich enough to have more than one or two manuscripts, the only books of that time.

But if she could not read, she knew by heart some of the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament. After she received God's message concerning her Son, she said over to herself the song that Hannah sang when Samuel was born, and at last she made a new song for herself. It is a little like Hannah's, but more beautiful. It rose to her lips like a fountain springing suddenly from the earth, and was as sweet and glad as the song of the lark when he soars above the broad green spaces of the country into the summer sky. This is how she came to sing it.

She had a cousin named Elizabeth, who was

soon to be the mother of John the Baptist, and who lived five days' journey from Nazareth, among the hills of Judæa. Elizabeth was growing old, but Mary loved her dearly, in spite of the many years between them. She felt that to her alone could she tell the wonderful, strange thing that was her secret. So she set out to visit Elizabeth, and as she journeyed I think she was constantly singing Hannah's song to herself. But it did not quite express all she felt, and she began to fit other words to her thoughts, little dreaming that she was making a hymn of praise which would be sung all over the world.

At length, weary, she reached her journey's end; but before she could tell one word of her beautiful story, Elizabeth hastened out, and with a kiss greeted her by exclaiming, "Blessed art thou among women"; for to Elizabeth also God had sent the message that Mary would be the mother of our Lord. Then the sweet thoughts and words which had been with Mary on the way came to her lips, and she said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the other dear familiar words you know so well. We are not

told whether Mary made any other songs to sing to her little child, but the music of these lines which have come down to us gives her a high place among God's singers.

After she had stayed some months with Elizabeth, she returned to Nazareth to do again the commonplace duties which came to her hand. But nothing commonplace could dim the vision of the angel or the glory of his promise. Strange things and difficult to understand had come into her life, but she did not seek to avoid or to forget them. Twice we read, "she kept all these sayings in her heart." What she could understand shed light for her on her way, and the mysteries she could not read, she waited in perfect patience for God to make plain. There was much to make her very thoughtful, and her thoughts were prayers.

On that blessed night when Jesus came to earth and lay cradled in a manger in the stable of the inn at Bethlehem, the shepherds made haste from the hillside to tell of an amazing vision. They had seen a great light, far brighter than the moon or the stars which had been shining quietly upon the sleeping

earth. And, behold, an angel had proclaimed the birth of the Messiah, and thousands of his companions, like birds of light, had sung: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Other travellers in the inn, startled from their sleep by the shepherds' arrival, listened also to the story. They wondered and forgot, but Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

Mary was more than thoughtful, she was very brave. When she brought her little child to the Temple to make an offering for Him, as all pious Jews did for their firstborn son, an old man met her. He had spent many years in the courtyards of this holy place, praying to God for mercy on his nation. As he saw Mary approach him, he knew in his heart that at last his prayers were answered, and that the babe in her arms was to be the Saviour of the people. He took the little child from the mother and spoke beautiful words concerning the wonderful deeds the boy would do when grown to manhood. Then he added a strange, sad saying, which chilled Mary's glad heart like an icy wind: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own

heart also." Very soon she was to learn that her dear child was in danger, and that everyone did not love Him, although the angels had sung their grand sweet song at His birth. It happened in this way.

There came three wise men, journeying from the East by the guidance of a star, to bring their gifts to the little babe, whom they hailed as a great and expected King. Mary, the peasant girl of Nazareth, took the gold and frankincense and myrrh from these mysterious men, not as treasures for herself, but as the first offerings to the beloved Son of God.

Now Herod, who was then king, had heard from the wise men of this new-born prince, and was filled with a passion of fear and jealousy. To make sure of the death of Jesus, he commanded that all the babes in Bethlehem should be killed. Joseph, Mary's husband, being warned of God, set her with her child upon an ass, and they stole away from their own country to take refuge in far-off Egypt till the tyrant Herod should be dead. It was a long, difficult journey for the little party across desert lands and through strange cities. Mary must have been

haunted by the words she had heard from the dweller in the temple, but she never flinched or complained.

How much we should like to know something of their wanderings. Did Mary and her child see the vast river Nile and its strange boats like great winged creatures? Perhaps they rested beneath the shadow of the pyramids; and the Sphinx, that mighty creature of stone, crouching in the desert, half woman half beast, gazed upon Mary with inscrutable eyes, seeing in her arms the answer to the questions of the ages.

But these adventurous days soon passed. On the death of Herod, Mary and Joseph brought back their child to Palestine and settled in Nazareth. And then for many months life flowed quietly on. There was the carrying of the water from the well, the grinding of the corn in the hand-mill, the daily give and take of village life. But by her side grew up the living reminder of the angel's message,—a sinless child, upon whom she rested wondering eyes as she waited for the day of His glory.

When He was twelve years old He accompanied them to Jerusalem to the Passover Feast.

On leaving, they lost trace of Him, and after three anxious days they found Him talking with the teachers of the Law, and asking them the questions which Mary had long ago given up trying to answer. For the moment she thought her son was going to leave her then, for He spoke of "doing the business of My Father," and she knew that He meant God. But He came quietly back to the old home and was as obedient and helpful as before.

Still the years came and went. The child Jesus became the man, who patiently did the will of others, and toiled at Joseph's trade of carpentry ; and long custom made the mother almost forget that He could not be hers for ever, and that her will could not always rule the Son of God. Yet, when the moment came for her to learn this lesson finally, she was not offended. She had kept the sayings and happenings of early days in her heart, and now was ready to bow her meek head and to be taught all God's will.

It was at a wedding feast that she made her last surrender. Jesus had been set apart for His great work by John the Baptist, and had gathered to His side five comrades. When

the marriage day of some intimate friends of Mary's drew near, He and His disciples were bidden to the festival. Perhaps there were more guests than had been expected, for before the end of the feast it was discovered that there was no more wine. The friends of the house began to look distressed, and Mary, who felt for them, said to Jesus, "They have no wine."

I do not know whether she expected her Son to do a miracle, or whether she turned to Him naturally because He had always been so helpful at home. At any rate she took upon herself to hint to Him to do something. Jesus answered, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

These words may sound harsh, but Jesus had begun His great work. Henceforth He could only receive commands or guidance from the Father in Heaven. It was true kindness to teach His mother at once to understand the change. Therefore He spoke in this cold and distant way. She was not hurt because her dearest Son made her feel that He belonged to God rather than to her. She saw that she had made a mistake, and contented her-

self with whispering to the servants, “Whosoever he saith unto you, do it.” I think she spoke these words to herself as much as to them. It was as though she said, “I who used to command must now obey.” So she learnt to let her Son do His divine work in His own way, and thus become her Saviour and Master. How terrible if she had been proud and unwilling to be taught by Jesus. I think it would almost have broken His heart if His mother had not believed and obeyed Him.

The hour came when Mary’s faith and courage and patience were to be tried to the full. It was the day of her dear Son’s death. Almost all His disciples shrank from His side when He was led to the cross, but His mother followed Him and pressed so near to Him that at one time she stood where He could easily see her. His hands and feet were pierced with nails and the cross was raised above the people in the scorching sun. Still she waited, so that He might see some who loved Him amongst the jeering crowd. She would fain have lingered to the end, but Jesus gave her into the care of His beloved disciple, and sent her to John’s house so that she

might be spared the last agony. Yet she was at the foot of the cross long enough to be one of the few friends on whom Jesus gazed before His eyes were closed in death. Thus it came to pass that among the last faces which Jesus saw was the same face of love He had seen first of all as a little child. Most women would have shrunk in horror from such a sight, but Mary, brave at the beginning, was brave to the end, ever faithful to her Son. She was braver than many soldiers who have fallen in battle, than many martyrs who have died for the sake of truth. For it is more terrible to see those you love best suffer, than to suffer yourself.

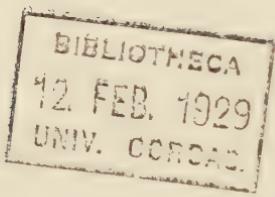
Do you ask me how a poor weak woman could be so full of courage? It was because she trusted God completely and loved much. She trusted God that He was doing all things well. She loved her Son so fully that she forgot herself.

If you, too, would be brave, dear child, you must trust and love much. Remember, it is faith and love which make the coward victorious, and change weak men and women into the heroes of God.

MARY WEEPING OVER CHRIST

A facsimile in miniature of the original picture by
FRANCESCO RAIBOLINI (1450-1517), in the National
Gallery, London.



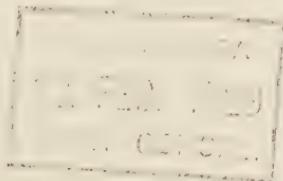


CHAPTER II.

HIS BROTHER JAMES.

WHEN you think of Jesus as a child at Nazareth, you must remember that He had brothers and sisters. Of the sisters we know nothing, but the brothers were James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. We cannot tell whether they were the children of Joseph by a former wife, and therefore older than Jesus, or sons and daughters of Mary, younger than Jesus, her first and heaven-born child. If they were younger than He, we can imagine how kind He would be to them, taking them often into the open country to see the flowers and the birds, and as they grew older, teaching them the meaning of the beautiful world and the wonderful history of their ancient race.

But most people think that those brothers and



sisters were older than Jesus, and that their own mother was dead. In that case He would be the youngest of the household, and we can easily believe that they loved to play with Him and to work for Him. As He grew older they were not jealous that He increased in favour with those who knew Him, and if they had gathered from Mary something of the wonders of His birth, they must have looked upon Him with a kind of awe.

Perhaps, one by one they married and made homes of their own in Nazareth, and the years flowed evenly on, until the time came when the stern voice of John the Baptist rang in men's ears, calling them to prepare for the coming of the Highest. We are not told that James went to hear the Baptist preach, but we may be almost sure that he did so, and that he made up his mind as he listened to be like him. He did not leave his home in Nazareth and become his disciple, but it is related that he made a vow to be very simple in his manner of life, never to drink wine or eat flesh or indulge himself in any way.

About this time his brother Jesus began to

preach. Like the Baptist, He uttered the warning cry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." James must have rejoiced at this, and still more when he heard of the miracles of Jesus. He must have thought to himself, "My brother is a great prophet and messenger from God. All we have looked for is come to pass."

But as the fame of Jesus grew, James and the other brothers began to be uneasy, and somewhat jealous. They could not bring themselves to believe that He who had grown up at their side was the great Messiah for whom the Jews had been looking so eagerly.

So doubt crept in, and the affection began to wear thin on their side.

One day Jesus returned to the old town where He had grown to manhood, and going into the familiar synagogue stood up to read from the appointed portion some of the most beautiful promises of the Bible. Then He closed the book and said simply, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." All present knew that He was declaring Himself to be the fulfilment of the grand words that had been read year by year for centuries. This was the moment of

trial for His brothers' faith, and it dropped from them like a garment. When the people of Nazareth rose up to kill Him they were not at His side. They feared and doubted and held back.

Sadly He went down to Capernaum, where the people knew less of Him, but believed in Him more readily. It was by the lake of Galilee, not in Nazareth, that men were ready to lay aside their trade and leave friends and home for His sake. But though He came safely to the place where He was loved and trusted, He had been wounded—wounded not by those who had so eagerly snatched at stones to kill Him, but by the angry suspicion of the men who should have known Him best. Again and again we hear Him say, “A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin and in his own house.” Among His own kin and in His own house, His mother alone had faith in Him.

And the brothers of Jesus were not content with separation from Him. They wished to hinder His work. They heard that some of the leaders among the Jews were sending down

messengers from Jerusalem to trap Him in His words and to take Him prisoner, and were astonished that He who had always been so meek had drawn down this hatred upon Himself. They began to think that He must be mad. When the news came to them that He laboured so unceasingly in teaching and healing the people, as barely to take time to eat or to rest, their fears were confirmed. They felt that at all costs He must be silenced, and sent messengers to lay hold of Him and bring Him away by force.

As these rough measures failed, they determined to try persuasion. So they arranged that Mary should go with them, no doubt thinking that Jesus would readily listen to His mother. When they reached the spot where He was teaching, they found that rumour had not said too much. The people pressed so densely round Him that there seemed no chance of making their way to His side. Accordingly they drew back to the outskirts of the crowd and passed a message from one to another until it reached His ears. You may perhaps have expected Him at once to stop His teaching,

that they might speak with Him. He did not do this. He read His brothers' thoughts and saw plainly their disbelief which urged them to hinder His work. But His work was God's work, and no one, however dear, must interfere with that. So Jesus sent no answer to the demand that He should speak with them, but turned to those at His side with this question, "Who is my mother and my brethren?"

There was a moment of silence as He scanned the perplexed faces of His listeners. Then looking upon His disciples and the faithful women who had followed Him, He answered His own question: "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." James and his brothers did not linger when they were told what Jesus had said. They left Him, and turned homeward, but they were not at ease. Their old love for Him struggled with their displeasure. His words and deeds rebuked them, yet His claim to be the Messiah they would not accept.

Once more they troubled Jesus, and it seems that they had been growing angry in the interval.

On their way up to the Feast of Tabernacles they again sought Him at Capernaum. This feast, which, like the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost, could only be kept at Jerusalem, was one of rejoicing and thanksgiving, for it always followed the harvest. It was the custom to leave one's house and to live out of doors under arbours made of the branches of trees, in memory of the far off time when the Israelites had lived in tents in the desert.

But James and his brothers were hardly in the mood for rejoicing, and they gave Jesus a cold greeting. Perhaps they were covering up their uneasiness by harsh speech. Perhaps their fellow-townspeople had been taunting them, saying, "Well, what is this brother of yours going to do next? How long is he going to keep us all waiting?" The people of Nazareth had never been willing to accept Him even as a prophet, and in Capernaum His great popularity was waning. The crowds who had flocked to Him on the shores of Galilee had wished to make Him their leader in an attempt to overthrow the power of the Romans who ruled

them. He had refused, and by uttering deep thoughts, difficult for them to understand, had chilled their ardour. This was not the kind of Messiah they had been taught to expect ; and though Jesus went steadily on His way, preaching the kingdom of heaven, and healing the sick who sought His help, all His kindness did not prevent their falling away in bitter disappointment.

Whatever the reason, the brothers greeted Jesus almost rudely, saying, “Depart hence and go into Judæa, that Thy disciples also may behold the work Thou doest. . . . If Thou doest these things, manifest Thyself to the world.” It seemed to them that the festival at Jerusalem gave the best opportunity for a display of His power. Let Him work a great wonder and become a popular hero. Let Him declare His intentions against the Roman rule, and become a real leader of the nation. Then they would believe His claims and become His disciples. Then they would be proud to call Him their brother, and no more fear the doubtful looks and smiles of their countrymen.

You can imagine that their words must have

been like knives in the heart of our Lord. It was as though they sneered at His work and said, "Be one thing or another. Keep us waiting no longer. Give up this half secret, half open life. If you are really going to save our people, declare yourself in Jerusalem, and let all men know what you intend." He answered them quietly as ever, reminding them, as He had done before, that from His Father in heaven alone came the commands that must direct His action. It was to themselves they must give heed.

"My time," He said, "is not yet come, but yours is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that its works are evil. Go ye up unto the feast. I go not up yet unto the feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled." *Their time was always ready.* They best of all should know that His kingdom was one of the spirit. They first of all should be His followers. For Himself, they must leave Him to tread the way of the Cross as His Father willed it.

The brothers did not argue further, but set off across the hills and through the plain of Esdraelon to Jerusalem.

Thus Jesus received no help or comfort from His brothers in these last months when the shadow of the Cross fell dark upon His life. Nor in the bitter hour of His death were they with Him. Alas, it is often those knowing most about our Lord who least understand Him. The children who have learned to say His name as soon as they can speak, and day by day have knelt to pray, do not always stop to think or care what it all means, while far away, in countries where pain and danger and hatred await His followers, less happy children become His true disciples.

But our Lord does not forget even those who forget Him. He did not forget His brothers, and in the end He won them all. It was in this way.

After Jesus died and rose from the grave, the story of His appearance to His disciples came to the ears of James, startling him and filling him with misgivings. Often he went apart to think over these strange things, and to wonder whether, after all, he had been wrong, and had failed to see in the child who had grown up at his side the very Son of God. He

had kept his vow of simple living. He had sought no pleasure, and yet he had no peace. At last, one day as he struggled with himself in solitude, peace came to him. We do not know whether it was in his house at Nazareth or at some quiet spot in the country, but somewhere the risen Christ stood before him. We are not told in what words the Lord spoke to him, or with what bitter self-reproach James confessed his sin. But from that moment the mist of doubt passed from his mind, and to him, as really as to John the beloved disciple, Jesus was the Saviour of the world.

The other brothers heard from James of his wonderful experience, and were won to be His disciples also. Thus when Jesus finally ascended to heaven, not only His mother but also all His brothers belonged to the little company of friends who met day by day in the upper room in Jerusalem.

What could be done to atone for his fault James did. Although his early unbelief had prevented his being appointed an Apostle of Jesus, he worked as zealously as any of the twelve for Him whom he now rejoiced to call his

Master. He lived on in Jerusalem for seventeen years at least, winning the love and respect not only of the followers of Christ but also of many of the Jews. Once when there was a great dispute among the Christians, which threatened to become a fierce quarrel, it was his wisdom, prudence, and kindly feeling towards those who differed from him which saved the church from shipwreck.

Before he died he wrote a letter to those Christians who had continued to observe the Jewish rites, going up to Jerusalem for the Feasts ; and we think we can see here and there in the words which he wrote when he was old the remembrance of his mistakes and of his Brother's—his Saviour's—forbearance.

In one place he writes, “God giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.” *Upbraideth not!* Was he thinking of the readiness of Jesus' forgiveness, and that to one who had been so slow to believe, He had given work to do ? Again, the whole of the third chapter of this epistle concerns the evil done by hasty and angry words. Did he remember, as he wrote, the rude gibe with which he had greeted Jesus

before the Feast of Tabernacles? Last of all, he bids his readers "Be patient"; for he adds, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Was he not reminding himself how Jesus had to wait for him, and that the Lord of Glory had "long patience" for his soul?

CHAPTER III.

HIS KINSMAN, JOHN THE BAPTIST.

BEFORE Jesus began His work, the way had been prepared by His kinsman, John the Baptist. They were of nearly the same age, but as regards most things their early days were very unlike. John was an only child, Jesus was one of a big household. The father and mother of John were old people, the mother of Jesus was quite young. Zacharias, John's father, was a priest, who had been connected with the Temple all his life. Joseph, the husband of Jesus' mother, was a simple carpenter, who went up to Jerusalem only occasionally. It does not appear that John worked at any trade, but Jesus busied Himself with His handicraft till He was thirty years of age. The greatest difference, however, lay in this,—Jesus lived quietly at home right on into

manhood, while John went forth, when little more than a child, to live a lonely wandering life among the rocky hills and desert lands in the south-eastern outskirts of Palestine.

They cannot therefore have seen much of each other in later years. But in their early childhood, when Mary returned from Egypt, it is difficult to imagine her passing through Judæa without visiting Elizabeth, and then John and Jesus must have met.

For what reason did John go forth so early to live this hard, strange life? We cannot be certain, but it seems very probable that both his father and mother, who were quite old people at his birth, soon died. Thus he was left to a large extent to guide his own life. He did not enter on his duties as a priest, for he cared little for the elaborate services of the Temple. His one passion was to see men really good and true. He hated hypocrisy and knew that worshippers in the Temple were often hypocrites. Perhaps it was the evil life of some of the priests he had met which drove him to forsake the company of men, and to live alone with his thoughts and with God. He must have had some portions of the Jewish

Bible with him, and he was certainly able to read them, for he was familiar with the writings of the prophets, especially of the prophet Isaiah.

Thus the years which Jesus spent in the workshop in Nazareth, going every sabbath to the synagogue, John passed in the open air, his only temple roof the arch of the sky, his only preachers the sights and sounds of the wild desert life and the messages of the hero-prophets of his race.

How lonely and bare it was in the heat of summer. The hills often cinder-coloured, and sometimes without a shrub from base to summit. The bushes growing on the more level ground were bluish, and looked shadowlike in the stifling air. Scarcely a bird could be seen, only a few wild beasts prowled and roared afar; but the locusts were always in sight, vivid yellow, and tossed hither and thither in the air by the hot winds. Only the wild bee, with its pleasant hum, gave some hint of the sounds about the old home in the white-walled house where John first saw the light.

But he was not untaught. God was preparing him in this solitude to be one of the greatest

preachers of the world. As the years went on his mind grew clearer through constant prayer and listening to the divine voice. Two certainties ever stood before him. The first was, that men through sin were totally unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven ; and the second, that the Kingdom was at hand. Even though the universal need of repentance weighed heavily upon him, his sombre soul grew glad as he became more and more convinced that the Deliverer of Israel was about to appear. At length he could no longer keep his knowledge to himself. He felt that he must prepare men for their King, and at once raise his voice and warn them of the danger in which they stood. But he did not make his way up to Jerusalem to cry aloud his message there. He still avoided the towns. He began his mission in the wilderness.

As people journeyed along the roadways near the Jordan valley an awe-inspiring figure at times appeared in their midst when they rested by the way. His only garment was of rough camel's hair ; his girdle was not of silk or cloth, but of undressed leather. He never asked for food or money, and those who knew the desert best said

that he lived on locusts and the honey of the wild bees, found in the clefts of the rocks or in hollow trees. His message was short, but carried fear and conviction with it : “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” His words pierced dull consciences and awakened sleeping souls. Rough men felt their sins when he spoke ; the boldest and the most despised, alike listened eagerly and obeyed him.

No one had ever been plainer of speech. He told the soldier to be content with his wages, and the taxgatherer to take no more than his due. Yet men returned to him fascinated, for there was the ring of utter reality in his voice. At last, as his fame spread abroad, people began to pour out of the towns and villages of Judæa and of Galilee, to see and hear him. The more earnest among the Jews, who felt that the tyranny of sin was worse than the tyranny of foreign governors, flocked to his side, and some even began to stay for weeks at a time to learn more from him, and to grow strong by contact with his courage.

He chose a new method of enrolling his disciples. He did not place a mark upon them

or give them a secret sign, but after they had confessed their sins he bathed them in the water of the river Jordan.

When men of other nations became Jews, as sometimes happened, they were required by certain teachers to bathe themselves as a sign that they were forsaking their old religion, but this was the first time that anyone had proposed that a Jew by birth should do such a thing. And most people would have objected that only the priests, and the scribes who copied and studied the law, had the right to introduce a new ceremony. But John, who had listened and listened for the voice of God till it had sounded clearly in his heart, consulted neither priest nor scribe. He may have drawn his idea in part from a sect of the Jews who lived very sparingly, and practised frequent bathing in cold water as a part of their religion.

However this may be, it was a rite readily adopted by his followers as a test of earnestness and a sign of a change of spirit. If a man would confess his sin, then John was ready to baptize him in token that his old life was left behind. But baptism meant more than

the forsaking of the old ways. It meant a promise to make ready for a new leader and a new movement, for John spoke more and more of one who was coming, greater than he, who would baptize with fire and utterly destroy the unprofitable soul.

Word of the great preacher who baptized his followers came to Jesus at Nazareth, and to Him it was the call for which He had long waited. He arose and took the road to the Jordan valley. There He stood among the crowd that listened to John's fiery words, saw men baptized, and then presented Himself for baptism.

It seems that John did not recognise his kinsman, and therefore did not know that he was speaking to Him who had been revealed to Elizabeth as the Messiah. But when the moment came for the confession of sins, behold, Jesus had none to confess, and could only speak of the sins of the nation ; and from His words John saw that here was a man who had no part in sin, and who hated it even more intensely than he did himself. He felt it was not possible for him to baptize one whose soul was white and unflecked by any stain. Here was no new follower,

but one who should be his own leader. Therefore he said to Jesus, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He would not make His perfect holiness a reason for avoiding the badge of the new movement. Just as He went to the synagogue each sabbath-day though He was at every moment in communion with the Father, so He sought baptism, though He had always been perfectly dedicated to the will of God. In all these things He joined Himself with His fellowmen.

It was a great moment as they stood with the water swirling past them. To Jesus it was the actual beginning of the task for which He had come to earth, and John must have felt almost sure that here was the expected One of whose coming he had spoken so earnestly. Complete certainty came at once. As Jesus went up out of the water the blue sky seemed rent across, and a bird of light shaped like a dove descended upon Him, and a voice was heard, "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." From that moment John knew that

He who came in perfect holiness, clad like an ordinary workman, was the Christ, whose cause he served, whose herald he had been.

Next day John looked eagerly for the face of Jesus, but found it not. Day after day he looked in vain for His reappearance, and yet he preached and baptized with redoubled energy, for now he knew that the long waited One had come. There was a new urgency in his voice, and so large a measure of success in his work that at last the Council at Jerusalem, which was understood to guide and control the Jewish worship, became alarmed, and sent down a number of men to talk with John, and find out who he claimed to be and why he baptized.

John met these dignitaries of Jerusalem just as simply and calmly as though they had been working folk. Though he saw the contempt in their eyes, he did not fear them when they asked him roughly, "Who art thou?" He was eager that he should not be mistaken for the Messiah, and answered "I am not the Christ." Then said they, "Why this excitement then? Art thou Elijah?", for the Jews thought that Elijah or some prophet would appear on earth before the

coming of the Messiah. John answered, "I am not." To a fresh question, "Art thou the prophet?", his answer was shorter still, "No." "Who art thou then?" asked the priests, growing impatient, for they must take a definite answer back to Jerusalem.

Then the words of the prophet Isaiah poured from his lips: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." That was all he wished to be to men, just a voice, so that the glory should not be his, but his Lord's. And his whole work was to prepare the way. In the East, most of the roads are mere tracks, full of ruts and holes and hollows. Before a king makes a journey, men are sent forward to mend and level the roads, and to fill up the worst hollows. In the same fashion John was making ready for the King of Righteousness, by preparing a way for Him into the people's hearts. This very day, Jesus having ended His lonely sojourn of forty days in the wilderness, had reappeared as one of the crowd that gathered about John.

The deputation from Jerusalem was not yet satisfied, and they asked further, "Why then

baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor that prophet?" John looked on them with the light of his triumphant secret in his face and replied, "Why? Because there standeth one in the midst of you whom ye know not, even he that cometh after me." Then, as he remembered the vision of the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, he added, "I am not worthy to unloose his sandal."

The men from Jerusalem asked no more questions. It was clear even to them that John sought nothing for himself. It was for the glory of another he lived and strove and worked.

You can imagine how perplexed the closest comrades of the Baptist were when they heard the final answer. Were they to seek out the new leader who was so high above their master? Would it not be disloyal to desert one who had done so much to open their eyes? John did not leave them long in doubt. Next day, and again the day after, he pointed out Jesus to his most fervent disciples, and plainly showed that they would please him best by following the stranger whom he loved to honour. John was like one of those lighthouses far out in the stormy

sea with no haven at its foot. No ships ever gather to its shelter, but, guided by it, they pass on up the channel to another light, whose bright red gleam welcomes them to the harbour above which it shines.

But not all the disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus. Some of them preferred to stay with their old teacher, with his shaggy robe and unkempt hair, rather than to follow one whose dress and manner of life offered little contrast to their own. Others, while prepared to obey the Baptist, because he expressed what they had come to feel about the sins of the nation, were made suspicious of Jesus by His demand for implicit trust, when He said, on the one hand, "Follow me," and on the other, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Later, suspicion deepened into jealousy.

This jealousy came to a head when Jesus, finding that even yet men were not ready to receive Him, also began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and coming with His disciples into the Jordan valley, set them to baptize there. There had to be repentance before men could understand His teaching. The ploughshare had to go yet more deeply before the

seed could be sown. So He whose proper task was the sowing of seed came to do for a time the same work as John, and drove the plough. The disciples of John could not see that Jesus and their master were working hand in hand. One day some of them were arguing with a Jew about purifying the body and the soul by washings of water, and their opponent flung in their face the fact that there was a second Baptist at work, even Jesus, who was meeting with greater success than their master, and was followed by larger crowds. John's friends felt it to be intolerable that another should use his methods and draw away his followers.

But when they hurried to complain they met with no sympathy. Their leader only seized the opportunity to assure them that he was second to Jesus, and must remain second—that he was only His helper, to be left aside when his little piece of work was done. He said, “Jesus must increase, and I must decrease.” He was so full of ardour for the glory of God that it was nothing to him to see his followers dwindle, if only they went to swell the crowds that pressed about the Christ. There never lived a more self-forgetting man than

John, though he scarcely knew the word ‘love,’ and it was never on his lips. He thought no more of his own glory than of the dust driven before the wind.

Do you wonder why John himself did not follow Jesus? It would have been easier for him to do so than to see the number of his disciples dwindle until he was left with a handful of narrower, harder natures, and he would have been glad to be at Jesus’ side. But you can understand that some of his followers were not ready yet to acknowledge Jesus, and jealousies and quarrels would have been introduced among Jesus’ friends. Besides, there was still the special work he was called to do. He had been sent to prepare the way, and although the Messiah had come, his own work must still go on. His shattering rebukes and piercing appeals were still needed. So he laboured on to the end, lonely, sombre, and fearless.

John died before his master, and by violence. Herod, the prince of Galilee, had a famous castle overhanging the Jordan, and not far from the Dead Sea, and on his journeys backwards and forwards he was often told of John, and indeed

sometimes heard him preach and talked with him. The prophet's rude eloquence gripped him, and roused a lingering desire for better things. But he had stolen away his brother's wife and made her his queen, and John, who feared neither king nor priest, denounced this flagrant sin. Herod, goaded on by his wife, to enforce silence, thrust him into prison, but did not wish or dare to kill him, and freedom was given to him to see his disciples.

And now for a moment John's heart failed him somewhat. He who had lived so long in the open air, smelling the fresh dawn, cooled by the night mists, breathing the winds which came from afar, was cooped up in a narrow cell. The burning words which rose to his lips could not be spoken. Sin, sin, sin seemed all around. A fog of doubt settled down upon him. The Christ he had welcomed did not scourge the people's sins as he had expected. He gathered from his disciples that Jesus was neither the axe of destruction against evil, nor the devouring fire to consume the worthless and unclean. Could there, after all, be a mistake? Was Jesus not the true Messiah?

Such a thought only rose in his mind to be trodden down. But his disciples were unconvinced, and he determined to send them to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The answer which Jesus would send would cheer his own soul, and would do more than any words of his to instruct his disciples.

When the messengers reached Jesus He gave them no direct reply. He wished that they themselves should find an answer. So, while they waited and observed, He went on caring for the sufferers before Him. He healed the plague-stricken, and delivered men from their frenzy, and gave sight to the blind. One after another, beautiful deeds of kindness and of power flowed from His hands. Then He turned to the messengers and said; "Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."

Why did Jesus answer in this way? I think because He understood John perfectly, and was full of sympathy with him in his loneliness

and depression. His message was as much as saying; "I am not surprised if you doubt whether I am the Messiah, for clearly you do not know all about my work; but now, when you hear of my deeds, all your doubts, if you indeed have any, will be at rest." It was the answer of one great soul to another. But Jesus added significant words as He watched the narrow-minded faces of the messengers, who saw work and heard teaching so much beyond their master's,—"Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me."

And now the strong man's work was nearly done. Soon after John received Jesus' message, Herod's step-daughter came in during a great feast to dance before him and his nobles. Inflamed with wine, and charmed with the young girl's skill and grace, and with her becoming a dancing-girl for their pleasure, he bade her ask what she would, even to the half of his kingdom. She hastily consulted her mother, who was quick to seize her opportunity. Her enemy, whose influence with Herod gave her such uneasiness that while he lived she could have no peace, must die. A moment later her daughter

was asking in the banqueting-hall the head of John the Baptist as her reward.

The ghastly request on the lips of a girl would have sobered any man, but the prince feared the jeers of the court and dared not break his oath. Caught in a trap he yielded, the dreadful demand was satisfied, and the fiery spirit that had chafed between narrow walls passed forth to learn the sweeter, lovelier things of God, which had not been for him here. He was waiting in the Father's House to welcome his Lord ; and among all the multitude of Jesus' servants who have gone home by the road of the martyrs, there has never been one more faithful than the kinsman and herald of the Christ.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SISTERS OF BETHANY.

WHEN the day came for Jesus to begin His ministry, He gave up both His handicraft and His home in Nazareth. He finished all His orders and gladly laid down His tools and shut the door of the workshop for the last time. And one day the door of the little house where He had grown up was shut too. His mother seems to have gone to live with His brothers for a while, and He was thus left with no spot on earth which He could call His own. I think He missed the old home, where He could be quiet and at peace.

Once a man who had been listening as Jesus taught, and was touched by a momentary enthusiasm, said eagerly to Him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus

searched him with piercing eyes, and saw that beneath his excitement there was no steadfastness, and answered him ; “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.” He meant that even the beasts had lairs and the very birds places to which they returned to rest at night, but that He, when weary, had no shelter which He could call His own. As He wandered through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to lead men to His Father, He depended at nightfall upon the kindness of a friend or the courtesy of a stranger ; failing these, He sought the chance refuge of an olive garden.

There were, however, two places in which there were friends who kept open house for Him. One was Capernaum and the other Bethany.

In Capernaum He often stayed in Peter’s house. Down by the sea I picture it, within reach of the sound of the waves. Nets would hang on the walls and oars stand in the corners. There was not too much room, for Peter was married and his wife’s mother lived with them. But if it were poor and a little rough, it was a

place where He was loved, and Jesus spent so much time in Capernaum that it came to be called His own city.

But it was in Bethany that Jesus found His real second home.

Bethany was a small town lying only two miles from Jerusalem, and was separated from it by the low hill called the Mount of Olives. Within its walls there was one little household of three people who came to know Jesus well during the last two years of His life. Martha, the elder sister, owned a pleasant house there, and with her lived a sister called Mary and a brother Lazarus. They had all been quick to understand and trust our Lord, and He loved them and was their close friend. When He went up to Jerusalem in those last two years, it seems, though we cannot say for certain, that He used always to stay with them.

Picture Him coming out of the city as the sun neared setting, worn with preaching and with the discussions of the Pharisees and Scribes who sought to entrap Him. He crosses the little river Kedron and mounts the rocky road that winds round the hill, leaving the war of words

and the busy inquisitive talkers behind. Now He passes down the familiar road, and beneath the cypresses and up the narrow street to the well known door. The house shines bright and trim in the evening light, for Martha is a good housekeeper, and has everything well ordered. Within lies the pleasant courtyard, where vines climb about the walls, and where on the hottest day there are cool shadows. Here all is still and peaceful. This is the house where Jesus rested oftentimes, the last roof beneath which He slept. From its shelter He went forth to the Last Supper and to the Cross.

What were these people like who were such great friends of Jesus?

It appears that the father and mother had died when Lazarus was young, and Martha being the eldest was the head of the house. Martha was very different from Mary, active and generous, quick to speak and eager to do, warm-hearted but hot-tempered. Mary was quiet and thoughtful, often content to be silent, forgetting herself completely when she loved much, perhaps something of a dreamer. Both were united in their great love for Lazarus their brother, and

afterwards in their devotion to Jesus. But being so different, they did not always agree.

On one of Jesus' earlier visits to the house Martha was very eager to do Him honour, and made great preparations for the evening meal. She had scarcely welcomed Him before she busied herself seeing that all was made ready. Mary helped her for a while, and then went quietly and took her place at Jesus' feet to hear the wonderful things He said, which had only reached her confusedly as she followed Martha. Martha did not understand our Lord well enough at this time to know that He cared nothing for feasting and great preparations, and as she hurried from one room to another she saw with impatience that Mary sat idle, listening to Him, inattentive to all beside. Then something went wrong with her arrangements, and instead of saying calmly, "We must do with less," she became hot and irritated, and hurried to Jesus, saying, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Flushed and defiant, she stood before Jesus.

Even had Mary been in the wrong, Martha

should have waited till they were alone to complain. But Jesus was chiefly troubled to find her so busy and anxious about little things. When the moment came for quiet and thought she would still hurry about household work, too taken up with it to listen. "Martha, Martha," He said, and His tones were so quiet that in a moment she grew quiet too. She could not be offended when her name was spoken so kindly. He went on, "Thou art troubled and anxious about many things, but one thing is needful. Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Perhaps He glanced for a moment at the well filled table at which He reclined, and which was provided with so many dishes. But He did not mean so much to rebuke her too generous hospitality, as to awaken her to the deeper needs He had come to supply.

It is good that we do the work which comes to us, heartily and with all our strength; but the one thing needful cannot be ours unless, when the right moment comes, we can put duties and worries aside and listen in silence. Mary had learned this. Life would be but a

poor and sordid thing, and a burden heavy to be borne, if no still spaces were made wherein to learn of the love of God and the beauty of holiness. Mary sought her Lord, and in listening to Him forgot all else; and He who could read her heart aright knew that this was not because of selfishness, but because of her love of the Unseen.

We are not told the end of this story, but I think Martha also sat down quietly, and each forgot the other's faults in remembering Him.

Mary did not always sit with idle hands in Jesus' presence. Her love did not allow her to be content with merely listening to Him. The days passed and the end came near. She saw Him worn with many sorrows and weary with bearing upon His heart the sins of men, and she was full of a great longing to comfort Him. The longing grew, and led her to do a very beautiful deed. This was soon after He had called back her dear brother Lazarus from the grave, of which I will tell you in the next chapter.

Our Lord had returned to Jerusalem just a week before the Passover Feast and had made Bethany His headquarters, returning there each

evening. The people of Bethany were delighted to see Him, and wished to do Him honour because He had restored Lazarus to life, for Lazarus had been a favourite with them all. So they arranged to give a supper, and prepared it in the house of one who had been a leper but had been healed, perhaps by the hands of Jesus, and still bore the name of Simon the Leper. We may be sure that Martha was as busy as usual seeing that all went well and the dishes properly served. Every eye was upon Jesus, and upon Lazarus who sat near Him, and all were glad and making merry.

Our Lord must have found it hard to share the gladness of the hour, for He knew how near was the Cross, and how bitter a trial lay before those He loved. Mary alone, because of her great love, could understand something of what was passing through His mind. Dimly she was aware of a not far distant danger, and I think the vision rose before her of His dead body bruised and wounded by His enemies, who had done their worst. She thought that perhaps there would be none at hand to show care and reverence before it should be laid in the tomb,

and she was filled with a desire to show her love and to honour Him to the full now.

She had by her a little alabaster cruse, white and transparent, and filled with a very costly and sweet-smelling perfume. Perhaps she had bought it in the old days before she knew her Saviour, or perhaps she had procured it hastily for this very purpose. Now she had brought it to the feast, and coming close to Jesus, where He reclined at table with His feet stretched out behind Him, she broke the neck of the cruse, and poured the perfume first upon His head and then upon His feet, as lavishly as though it had been but water. Nothing was too precious to give to her dear Master. Then, though towels were at hand, she loosened her long hair and wiped His feet. It seems as though she had forgotten all others but Jesus as she poured forth the wealth of a love more fragrant and more precious than the sweet-smelling nard.

But the guests had noticed all her actions, and as the fragrance of the perfume filled the supper room and rose in the still evening air through the whole house, some of them began to murmur against her. Most of the Apostles had

little to give, and throughout Palestine the poor thronged to ask alms. They began to calculate how much the spikenard must have cost, and said to one another, "Three hundred silver pence!" It was a great sum to them, nearly nine pounds in our money. How many dinners and suppers and warm robes it would have provided for those who shivered and starved and had nothing.

Judas was loudest in the outcry, not that he cared for the poor, but he was keen and businesslike, and had been appointed to carry the bag in which the little company kept their common store. Of late, ambition and the love of money were turning his heart from Jesus, and he had sometimes pilfered from the bag. Now he was thinking how much of this sum he might have taken for his own use, and he spoke angrily of the shameful waste. Mary stood back shrinking, for she was a gentle soul, and had not thought to be found fault with for using as she chose what was her own. She could not say one word in self-defence, and yet she felt within herself that she had done right.

When Jesus heard the unkindly fault-finding

His sad spirit was stirred to speech. He was grieved that those who loved Him less did not understand how love as great as Mary's longed to do Him some personal honour before it was too late. "Let her alone," He said sternly; "why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always." The grumblers hung their heads as they heard these words, and their shame was touched with sorrow and fear as He went on; "She hath done what she could. She hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying."

For the burying? What did the Master mean? Was death so near? But before they had time to ponder this mysterious saying which struck them with horror, Jesus added with strong emphasis: "And verily I say unto you, wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Mary must surely have flushed with joy when she heard this high praise, but she was most of all satisfied because

the Master had understood the inner meaning of her deed. Yet her heart was very heavy, for her floating anxieties for His safety became one thick cloud of fear.

We never hear again of these two sisters. The tomb where they were laid is lost beneath the immemorial dust of centuries, but the story of Mary's understanding love is yet being told from China in the East to California in the West; and oftentimes when two sisters of very different temper have found it hard to be at one, the memory of Mary's deed has quickened some timid soul to the great sacrifice, and the record of Martha's rebuke has helped a busy generous woman to keep a quiet heart and gentle tongue.

CHAPTER V.

LAZARUS THE WELL-BELOVED.

THREE times we are told that our Lord loved in a special way. He loved everyone with a pitying love, and longed to save all men. He loved His Apostles with the love of a comrade, and called them His friends. But of three different men it is written, "Jesus loved him." One was the young ruler whose fertile fields lay beyond the Jordan. He was held back by his great wealth from becoming one of Jesus' most ardent disciples. One was the saint and poet John, who of all the Apostles most readily and fully understood his Master's teaching. The third was Lazarus.

Lazarus was one of those born to be loved, who attract us we know not why. We cannot say that he was brilliant. No word which

he spoke has been recorded for us. There is nothing to show that he was a hero, for there is no story revealing his courage. Not even can we say that he outshone others in pure goodness. We are only sure that he was lovable, that there was about him something so sweet and friendly that he won all hearts. He was specially dear to Jesus.

We gather that the little family of which he was one was well known, not only in Bethany but also in Jerusalem, for when loss and sorrow fell upon the two sisters, many Jews came from the great city to mourn with them. Probably the father and mother had been people of some wealth and importance, whose early death had drawn attention and sympathy to the children left behind ; especially as it would seem that Lazarus was the youngest of the three, and could not so well fill the place of the head of the family, for we are told that the house was Martha's.

Besides, their house was a peaceful hospitable spot, where friends and travellers were made welcome, and where Martha was always eager to busy herself for their comfort. We

can imagine how many would find it a pleasant halting-place when passing through the little town. Here for the moment the rich man laid aside his cares and the poor man his anxiety.

But at length the peace of this home was broken. Lazarus fell sick. Soon it was plain that he lay in danger of death. All that devotion could suggest was done, but done in vain. The day came when the sisters determined that One Person at least must be told of the sorrow hanging over them before it was too late. They sent the simple message which they felt must surely call Him to their side to console and perhaps to heal ;—“Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.” It was an appeal to touch even one who had not cared much for the dying man. Yet Jesus did not hasten at once to Bethany.

The messenger found Him wandering with His disciples through the grassy undulating pasture-land of Peræa, which lay beyond the Jordan. He had gone thither to escape the plots of the Jews who had wished to slay Him secretly before His work was done. Why did He still linger when He learned how thickly the

shadows were gathering about the little circle in Bethany? Not because He feared for Himself, but because even at the moment of receiving the message He knew that Lazarus whom He loved lay in the last stillness, and that the hour was preparing for His greatest miracle. Twice already He had raised the dead, but each time before the body had been laid in the tomb. Now He was to do a greater deed. He was to restore one who had been laid to rest for four whole days. He did not return with the messenger, but lingered two days, and then, telling the disciples that He must set forth for Bethany, He tried to break to them gently the news of Lazarus' death.

He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Then they, who had been pondering sadly Lazarus' sickness, grew brighter and answered, "Lord, if he sleepeth, he will recover." They were no doubt doubly relieved, for in this case surely the dangers of a return to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem need not be risked. Then Jesus said plainly: "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes I was not there, to the intent

ye may believe." Even now they did not understand fully, but in spite of the perils awaiting them as well as their Master, they followed Him. Most of them must have thought the return foolish and ill-timed, for the strength of His love and the splendour of His power were beyond their reckoning, but they were at least glad to exchange suspense for action.

If the days dragged for the disciples, how long and wearisome they must have seemed to Martha and Mary! Hour after hour they watched as Lazarus sank, and with each hour their hope sank too. Even before Jesus could have received the message they began to look for Him, but when Lazarus died in their arms they were without the comfort of His presence. How difficult it must have been for Martha, if not for Mary also, to shut out the thought, "He has forgotten." When they met the Master later, each greeted Him with the same words, showing how together they had agonised and hoped to the last:—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Then came the funeral, which follows death so quickly in hot climates. The sisters looked for

the last time on the dear face, and wound the long grave-clothes about his body. Their work was done. They sat down desolate. But still the coming of Jesus glimmered as a faint hope before them.

What sorrow Jesus laid upon His friends! People were ready to call Him unfeeling and unkind. Some who saw Him weep beside Lazarus' tomb said, "Behold how He loved him!" but others were whispering together, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused also that this man should not die?" They could understand love that healed pain, but the deeper love that could inflict pain to make place for a wider and more triumphant joy was beyond them. They could not fathom that Jesus never loved Lazarus and his two sisters more tenderly than when He lingered these two days in Peræa.

Before Jesus could reach Bethany He was seen, and a friend hurried to tell Martha of His coming. Impulsive in her grief as in her joy, she rose quickly from her seat beside Mary and hurried out to meet Him. There was reproach as well as lamentation in her greeting. What

she and Mary had said again and again to each other in their grief rose impetuously to her lips : “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” And then, as she felt the power and love which shone in Jesus’ eyes, she added, “ And even now, I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.” She did not really hope to see Lazarus return to life, yet for the moment anything seemed possible. He answered at once, to strengthen her faith, “ Thy brother shall rise again.” Still, she dared not take His whole meaning. He might be speaking of the final rising of the dead at the end of the world. That meant so long a time of waiting. So she answered, sadly, “ I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Then Jesus spoke once more, and uttered these mysterious and majestic words which make His disciples to rejoice and be exceeding glad even to this day : “ I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whosoever believeth on me, though he die yet shall he live ; and whosoever believeth on me shall never die.”

Strange words they must have sounded in the

ears of Martha, who felt herself even yet in the presence of death: stranger when she remembered that this Lazarus whom she had seen die was the beloved of our Lord. But Jesus had the right to say them, for He was about to prove them true. "Believest thou this?" He asked, pressing His promise inexorably upon her grief. Martha could not bring herself to believe all that these words of hope proclaimed. Yet, as she looked on Jesus and felt the impress of His power, it was easy for her to say that she did believe Him to be the very Son of God.

Then, quick of movement as she always was, she did not wait to ask what His purpose was, or to pour out her sorrow, but hastened to her sister. Either Jesus had asked for Mary, or Martha had read the request in His face. She found her sister sitting among her friends, who wept with her and had no heart to comfort her. Martha did not want them all to come, so she went up to Mary and whispered in her ear, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Mary sprang from her seat and hurried from the house, eager to meet the only One who could have driven back loss and

pain; the only One who could give comfort, now that loss and pain had done their worst. She too fell at His feet and uttered the same heart-broken cry that had burst from Martha's lips, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Then she could say no more. She could only weep. And the friends who, thinking she had gone to visit the grave, had followed her, broke out into fresh lamentation.

I think it must have seemed to Jesus as though the world's sorrow was beating like the waves of a dark sea about His feet. It was not only the pain of those He loved which smote Him, but of the countless others whose suffering He read in theirs. The wail of all the mourners of the world fell upon His ears, and He too wept. The time for delay was past. "Where have ye laid him?" He asked, and hastened to the spot, groaning in spirit as He went.

In Palestine, the dead were not laid to take their last rest in the soil. A cave is found, or hewn out of the rock ; and for door, a great stone is laid against the entrance. Jesus commanded that this stone should be removed. But as Martha looked once more upon the dark

cavern, her quick imagination saw the dear body of Lazarus already disfigured beyond recognition. She cried out that it was too late, and her faith ebbed away. Mary, who had loved to sit at Jesus' feet, had learnt silence, but for Martha it was a harder lesson. But the Most Pitiful had no rebuke for one who had been so sorely tried. He only spoke again the words of good cheer: "Said I not unto thee, if thou believest thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

The stone was rolled away. All the crowd grew silent as they fronted the darkness of the cave. The stillness was broken by the voice of Jesus in prayer. He lifted His eyes to the blue sky and said, "Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me." Evidently He had been praying all the time, and now He was sure that the dead man would rise to new life. The power of the grave was to be broken in a moment, and the greatest proof given that He who wrought the miracle was indeed the Son of God.

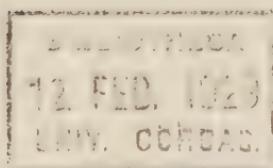
Having prayed, He cried with a loud voice, which went echoing into the town, "Lazarus, come forth!" One breathless moment, and then

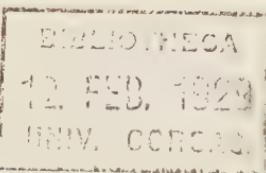
a figure clad in white came slowly out of the darkness into the sunshine. It was no other than Lazarus. The napkin the sisters' hands had tied was still about his face, and the grave-clothes were wrapped tightly round his limbs. No one dared to move, and Lazarus remained standing alone. Even Martha was awe-stricken, and did not hasten to her brother's side. Then Jesus said, "Loose him, and set him free." At once busy hands removed the napkin and loosened the bands so that he could walk home. But no one broke into shouts of joy, and Lazarus did not speak. All was so sudden and so strange. It was as if they stood in the very presence of God.

It was a great deed which Jesus wrought on the man He loved. But when He went to the Cross and died there, after passing through the dark agony, He did a greater deed, and gave a higher proof of love. For by His death He has raised the souls of a vast multitude from the death of sin. He has taken away the corruption of their hearts, which made them ugly and foul and hateful. He can do the same for you and me. We can never be to Jesus what

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

From the picture by RUBENS (1577-1640), in the
Royal Gallery, Berlin.





Lazarus was, His private friend. But He loves us each one, as if there were no other to love, and has told us, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and my sister."

CHAPTER VI.

MARY MAGDALENE.

YET another Mary was much with Jesus, but her life had been very different from that of His mother or of the sister of Lazarus. She belonged to the city of Magdala, whence came her second name, Magdalene.

Magdala was a town lying upon the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and was famous for the gorgeous dyed cloths that were used for the robes of the wealthy, and for the booths at which turtle-doves and pigeons were sold for sacrifice. It was so rich that its contributions to the Temple had to be sent to Jerusalem not upon the backs of camels and of asses, as was usually the case, but in a great covered waggon. Though it contributed so much to the Temple, it was a wicked city, where people were given over to pleasure.

Mary, who had grown up there from childhood, was stained with the evil of her birthplace. We are told that our Lord cast out of her seven devils. It is difficult to understand quite what this means, but it is clear that she was not mistress of her thoughts, and was continually led astray by evil passions. At times she must have seemed beside herself, so gay and reckless, that women who led good, well-ordered lives turned from her in horror.

Her soul was like a splendid room with glowing hangings and strange rare ornaments, but all the rich colours were clouded with dust, and foul things lurked in dim corners, and there by night shameful deeds were done. But when Jesus came and took possession, it was as though He lit a bright lamp in that dark place. Mary looked about her, shuddering at what she saw, and longed to cleanse it swiftly that it might become a fit dwelling-place for Him.

We do not know in what matter Jesus delivered Mary from her curse, but we are certain it was by showing her His love and power to forgive. A story is told of a woman who may have been this Mary, though no name is

given. It helps us to see how this sinful woman of Magdala was saved.

One day, in a town in which Jesus was teaching, He was invited by a Pharisee to come and eat with him. A woman who heard the invitation had been listening to Jesus most eagerly. She was beautiful, but lived a shameful life. No one tried to help her. Bad men only sought to make her more wicked, and those who called themselves good turned away from her in contempt.

But while Jesus spoke, she felt that He was different from everyone else. The people who drew aside their garments as they passed her were not as pure as He ; and yet, mingled with His purity, which might have been cold as the snow on Mount Hermon, was a tender pitifulness, as of the dew falling silently upon the flowers in the breathless summer nights. She began to hope that it was not too late even for her to become good. She may have heard Him speak these dear and wistful words : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my

yoke is easy and my burden is light." His teaching interpreted to her the ache of her heart, and she knew it to be the weariness of a life without fruit, and the oppression of a burden which was despair.

She pushed through the scattering crowd and followed the stranger to the house of the Pharisee. There, as Jesus reclined among the other guests, she drew near Him, trembling lest He should turn her away. But as He did not scorn her, she knelt behind Him and wept as she thought how kind He was, and that she was so unworthy of His kindness. Seeing that her tears were falling on His feet, which hung over the couch on which He lay, she took her long thick hair in her hands and tried to wipe them. Still, He did not push her aside; and gaining courage, she stooped and kissed His feet, and taking an alabaster box of ointment, broke it and covered them with the precious perfume.

Her most costly possession was given gladly to the commonest use, to refresh the feet of a travel-stained and humbly dressed teacher. And still Jesus was silent, but He knew all she meant to say with her tears and kisses and gifts.

The silence of His purity seemed like a welcome to her, and spoke to her of forgiveness.

The master of the house had been watching the woman with contemptuous, unkind eyes, and he began to think with scorn of the man who was so little of a prophet that He did not know her to be an outcast, and spurn her from Him. Jesus heard his thought as though it had been spoken. The woman had seen her sin, and turned from it. Let the Pharisee also see himself and his sin with truthful eyes. Jesus broke the silence by beginning to tell him a story of two men who were in debt, one for five hundred silver pence and one for fifty. Neither could pay, and both were forgiven. Then He asked which of the debtors would be most grateful. The Pharisee could not but answer, "He to whom most was forgiven." Thereupon Jesus pointed the story plainly, and pierced the Pharisee's thick-skinned self-complacency.

He had come weary to the Pharisee's house, but no water had been offered for His dusty feet; He had not been greeted with the kiss of ordinary politeness; the oil for anointing the heads of the guests had not been poured on His.

But this woman had washed His feet with her tears, had not ceased to kiss them, and had poured out freely, not a common oil, but the most precious of ointments. It was a great contrast, and whatever the woman's past sins, it convicted the Pharisee of more than a breach of courtesy. His was the sin of the unloving heart and self-complacent soul. Her sin was cleansed by the completeness of her self-surrender and by the fervour of her gratitude. "Wherefore," said Jesus, "her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Then He spoke for the first time to the woman, and said in the gentlest voice, but so that all could hear, "Thy sins are forgiven."

At this, His fellow-guests began to murmur and say, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" Jesus did not trouble to answer them, for the proof of His authority to forgive lay in His life rather than in words. But He had the same right as God in heaven to pronounce pardon; and lest the woman's faith should be shaken, He turned again to her and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Then she arose and

went from His presence, full of calm and of humility, and her eyes were pure and tender as a little child's.

In some such way Jesus saved Mary of Magdala from her sins. In her gratitude she loved to follow Him in His journeys, and to do what she could to make His wandering life less hard. Other women went with her. One was called Susanna, which means 'a lily,' and another was Joanna, a court lady, wife to one of Herod's officers. Joanna and Mary seem to have become friendly. They are mentioned together several times, and were never so happy as when they were following and serving Jesus.

They both came up to Jerusalem for the Passover week during which Jesus was crucified. They and the other women of Galilee watched from a little distance, and saw the death of their Master on the cross, while the savage crowd surged around Him. How helpless they felt. Only one last act of reverence remained to be done for Him. They prepared spices and fragrant ointments to anoint His body for the tomb.

At the break of dawn on the first day of the

week they set out to visit the grave. Mary, the youngest, outstripped the others, who were talking together and asking who would push away for them the weighty stone from the entrance. She was only eager to be at the spot. It was still dusk when she reached it, and to her horror saw that the cave was open. She did not stay to look within, but ran to find Peter and John, to tell them that the Lord's body had been taken away. They immediately set off to the place, and Mary hurried panting behind them. During this time, the other women had arrived, and seeing that the tomb had been disturbed, they also turned back to Jerusalem.

John reached the place first. He stooped down, and as he saw the linen clothes lying in order, hope awoke within him. Peter, slower of foot but bolder, went straight into the tomb, and at once saw that it was quite empty, and that the napkin which had covered the face of Jesus was wrapped up and laid in a place by itself. Clearly this was not the work of robbers, else the clothes and napkin would have been lying in a heap on the ground. There was nothing

to be done, so they turned away homewards, scarcely knowing what to think, though John at least was beginning to believe that their Master was no longer dead.

But Mary was still hopeless. She lingered, distracted with grief. She had built so much on rendering the last offices of love to Him to whose mercy she owed all. Dazed and weeping, she stood beside the empty cave; and as she wept, something drew her to stoop down and look through the low entrance. Behold, it was no longer vacant. Two angels were there, sitting one at the head and the other at the foot of the slab of rock on which the body of Jesus had been laid. They spoke, and asked her why she wept. Mary, too grief-stricken to be startled or afraid, replied, still weeping, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

Then, as she turned, she saw through the mist of her tears another figure, and a voice asked, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She thought it must be the gardener, for the body had been buried in a cave in a garden, and the spring flowers were gay

about her feet. A little hope awakened in her and she cried, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away." Her love and grief were so great that she felt able to carry her dead Master as easily as she would a little child. For a moment there was no answer, and then she heard just one word, her name, in a well-remembered voice. It was no stranger, but Jesus Himself. With one glad cry, "Rabboni" (that is to say, Master), she started forward to clasp her arms about His feet. She longed to hold Him lest He should vanish from her sight or melt into thin air.

But our Lord did not allow her to come near. "Touch me not," He said, "for I am not yet ascended unto my Father." The words seem to mean that the old comradeship of the road was done; now the fellowship of spirit between Lord and disciple must suffice. He had not returned to renew the life on earth, but to prepare them to think of Him as their Master in Heaven, ever real, though not to be seen or touched. Then he quieted Mary's trembling joy, saying gently, "Go unto my brethren and

say unto them, ‘I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God.’”

The sun had now risen on the city, and its roofs were bright with light, but Mary’s heart was filled with the sunshine of a hundred summers as she hurried through the streets to the disciples. Bursting into their presence she cried, “I have seen the Lord,” and poured out her wonderful story in their astonished ears.

This is all we know of Mary Magdalene, but she will always be renowned because the first person to whom the risen Saviour spoke. Jesus called men to be His apostles, but when He came first to earth it was His mother’s arms which cradled Him, and the chosen one to welcome Him as He came again, this time from the grave, was a woman too. He is the Saviour and Friend of womanhood as well as of manhood, and weeping women all the world over find it easier to-day to dry their tears when they remember that His first words after His victory over death were these, “Woman, why weepest thou ?”

And those who have sinned greatly before they learned to love Jesus and whatsoever is pure and good, take comfort when they re-

MARY MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE

A facsimile in miniature of the original picture by
FRANCESCO MANTEGNA (1470-1517), in the National
Gallery, London.



member that she who heard angels' voices and her own name on the lips of the Holy One on the resurrection morning, had once wandered through the streets of Magdala, haunted, polluted, and in despair.

CHAPTER VII.

NICODEMUS AND HIS FELLOW-COUNCILLOR.

Most of the friends of Jesus were of His own age or younger, but at the beginning and at the close of His life, aged and loving hands touched Him and did Him kindness. When His mother paid her first visit to the Temple after His birth, Simeon, nearly fourscore years old, took Him in his arms and blessed God that the Deliverer of Israel had come, saying, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” And at the close of His life it was two venerable men who reverently took His body from the cross and put it to rest in a new sepulchre, where as yet the dead had not been laid. These two men were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa.

All through the life of Jesus, when crowds

flocked to His side and He was in the heyday of popularity, they stood apart, afraid to show their love for Him and their belief in His teaching ; but when the end came, and His Apostles, save John, were scattered like the autumn leaves by a wintry blast, Nicodemus and Joseph stepped forth to declare themselves the disciples of One who had been executed as a criminal. You may have seen coloured pictures in which some figures are dim and indistinct until they are washed over with water ; then they become clear and bright because the invisible film of paint is moistened and dissolves so as to form colours. Just so, the flood of trouble at the death of Jesus makes the figures of Nicodemus and his fellow-councillor, long indistinct, stand out most clearly, for it was the one thing wanting to bring their faith and love to light.

Nicodemus was one of the best known and most honoured men in Jerusalem, for he belonged to the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews, which consisted of only seventy members. Besides, he was very rich. Apparently, his particular work was to take charge of the water-carriers who supplied the water for the use of the

pilgrims at Jerusalem, to cleanse themselves according to Jewish rites before worshipping in the Temple. He was therefore naturally interested in any movement like that of John the Baptist or of Jesus, in which baptism or washing was the sign which marked a new follower. Accordingly when Jesus began His work in Jerusalem, Nicodemus paid it a great deal of attention, and perceived that many of the signs He did at Passover time were no less than miracles. He longed to know more of the Carpenter of Nazareth, whose deeds were so wonderful and whose influence was widely felt, but he was afraid to show any open interest, for already many of the leaders were jealous of a teacher who had never been trained in the schools of the Rabbis. Yet he found out where Jesus was living, and determined to visit Him secretly, to discover if possible in what His power lay.

So one night, when no moon was to be seen, he quietly left his own house and set out to find Him. The streets were quite dark, for they were not lit by lamps as ours are, and only one who knew Jerusalem well could make his way about with any ease. Very few people ventured out

after nightfall, and any who passed the man swathed in his long cloak would never have guessed him to be the well known Pharisee they had seen in the Temple that morning. He did not need to enter by the main door, for in most Jewish houses there was an upper room which was used as a guest chamber, reached by an outside stair. He found Jesus sitting alone, or with one or two friends. If it was in the house of the Apostle John, probably that Apostle was with Him, for it is in the Gospel of St John that we read the story.

Nicodemus was a sincere man, though cautious and afraid of risking his position among his fellow-citizens. He did not for an instant imagine, as did many Pharisees, that these mighty deeds of mercy which Jesus was doing could be wrought through the power of evil. He said plainly that these deeds were good. Moreover, he did not hesitate to call Him "Rabbi," giving the title of respect and honour generally reserved for learned men. "Rabbi," he said, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him." Perhaps a touch

of superiority lingered in his tone. At any rate, Jesus did not reply by speaking of Himself, but said with great solemnity, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It was as though He said to Nicodemus, "Do not think that mere discussion will help you to understand me. You yourself must receive a new and child-like heart and have your outlook on life quite changed before you can understand me and my work."

Nicodemus knew very well how hard it is to change a man in middle age, and asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Perhaps he thought how often he had seen the pilgrims cleansed only in body by the washing of water and remain unchanged in nature, and he may have asked himself whether the baptism of Jesus affected men more deeply. If so, it was this thought of his Jesus answered when He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Baptism with water was the symbol of repentance, but that was not enough. The Divine Spirit is needed to give a

man new life and new love and new humility before he can enter the Kingdom.

This was such a startling thought to Nicodemus that he was filled with perplexity. He loved to see things quite clearly, and he had never thought of God as more than the Giver of the Law and the Judge. He could not see how God could also be the Giver of the new life with power to keep the Law. Just then the gusty wind whistled round the house and shook the door on its latch. Jesus answered his questioning look by reminding him that the Spirit of God was viewless and mysterious as the wind, and also as powerful. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, 'Ye must be born again.' The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

When Nicodemus passed again through the dark, narrow streets returning to his house, his mind was in a tumult. He longed to come to some decision and yet could not. He felt he must be so sure of himself before becoming a marked man to his fellows. And yet if this wonderful thing of which he had just heard,—an

immediate gift of new life in the soul for all who willed to receive it,—were true, how terrible to neglect it! And this man who had spoken to him with authority, who was he?

Nicodemus had called Him Rabbi, thinking to do Him honour, but what if it were no honour? What if He were someone infinitely greater than had yet entered into human life? The voice that had spoken in that hour to his very soul was present with him henceforth, though he returned for a time to the dull round of an unsatisfying ceremonial.

The months rolled on till a year and a half had passed. It was the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus had become more than ever a source of interest and a cause of contention to the people. Some openly declared Him to be the long expected Messiah. His name was constantly on their lips.

At last the chief priests and Pharisees resolved to take active measures against Him. He had condemned them and their doings more than once, and if His influence increased, it would seriously endanger theirs. They agreed that He should be arrested in the Temple and brought

before them for trial. The Council was gathered, but to their disappointment the men of the Temple guard who had been sent to take Jesus returned empty-handed. The chief priests, the leaders of the Council, cried out, "Why did ye not bring Him?" They stood abashed, and could only reply, "Never man spake like this man." Then the Pharisees burst out angrily, "Are ye also led astray? Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the Law is accursed." They had a profound contempt for the common people, who had heard Jesus gladly.

There was a moment's silence, and then a clear, quiet voice was heard asking a question. It was Nicodemus taking his courage in both hands. He could not bear to have it said that not one of the Council believed in Jesus, when his own mind was shaken with hesitations and dawning conviction. He would not confess that this much-hated man was his master, but at least there should not be condemnation without a hearing. So he put this question, "Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?"

It was a cautious thing to say, and yet it took some courage to say it. At once his fellow-councillors pounced on him and asked sneeringly, "Are you also of the party of this Galilean? Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." They were wrong. At least one prophet, Jonah, was from Galilee, and probably more. But people who have completely lost their temper are not over truthful in argument.

Nicodemus made no reply. He felt less of a coward, but he knew he was in part a coward. The face of Jesus, so commanding and so wistful, as he had seen it on that eventful night eighteen months before, rebuked him. He went to his house, ill at ease, one moment ready to confess this teacher as the true Messiah, and the next shrinking from any open action as from the plague.

But Nicodemus was yet to show that he had the hero-spirit. The day did come when he declared himself a follower of the Lord. Perhaps he would not have had the necessary courage even then if a braver man had not led the way.

There was another of the chief councillors as rich as Nicodemus who had also become a

secret disciple of Jesus. This was Joseph of Arimathæa. When he saw the Master whom he loved in spite of hesitations, bow His head upon the cross, a sudden purpose seized him. He had a garden close to Calvary wherein he had had a new tomb hewn out for himself. He had not served his Lord in the unwearying struggle for the souls of men, yet there remained one service he might render Him in death. At least no irreverent hand should touch His sacred body, and He should be laid to rest by one who loved Him. Joseph of Arimathæa no longer heeded the opinion of his fellow-councillors, for a great anguish had swept away his fears. He was ready now to risk his life.

He hurried to the Roman governor and asked to be allowed to take away the body of Jesus; and Pontius Pilate, still dissatisfied with his part in giving up a just man to the cross, was quick to grant the request.

Then Nicodemus also saw a last opportunity for service and a bitter consolation for having failed where he might have done much. He bought a great quantity of fragrant spices such as the Jews used for their dead. He

was ready at last to lavish all he possessed upon the Master he should have known and followed.

The two Pharisees met at the place of crucifixion and reverently released the body from the cross, wrapt it about with spices and with linen, and laid it to rest in the tomb in Joseph's garden. The blood-red anemones were about their feet, the bees were humming on their last journey home, and the scent of the aromatic shrubs made the April twilight sweet.

It was a fitting resting-place for the Carpenter of Nazareth, who was soon to rise again the Prince of Life and Saviour of the world ; and to us it is still blessed to remember that He was laid there in reverence and love and unspeakable sorrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO UNNAMED FRIENDS.

THE Feast of the Passover was the great event of the year to a Jewish household. At that time there were often over two millions of people in Jerusalem, for they flocked from all parts, bringing their children with them. Each little group that gathered round a paschal lamb must consist of not fewer than ten persons, and rarely exceeded twenty, for all must partake, and lambs are small in the East. The question as to where the feast was to be held was a serious matter, to be arranged long beforehand ; for when the city was so full it was often necessary for two or three little companies to share a room, even if no one thought of making money at such a time, and houses were opened freely.

Two days before His last Passover Jesus was sitting in the quiet home of Mary and Martha at Bethany, and the Apostles were wondering where He would hold it. He had expressed no wish, and they were ignorant whether anything had been arranged. Perhaps they were growing a little anxious, and were wondering whether they alone of all the Jews pressing through the streets of Jerusalem on the great day would not know to which house to turn their steps.

But Jesus had not forgotten. He had thought of everything beforehand, and had made sure that no spies should break in upon the last gathering of Himself and His Apostles. Alas, it was needful to take this precaution, for Judas was at His side, listening and watching and ready to sell his knowledge to the chief priests, who well might scheme to seize the Master at a moment when He was alone with the Twelve.

Jesus had a friend in Jerusalem whom He could trust, and who had gladly offered a room in which the feast might be held. The following plan had been arranged.

At a certain hour on the Thursday, a man-

servant carrying a pitcher of water upon his shoulder was to pass into the city, by the gate on the Bethany road, and walk straight on till he came to the house. As a rule, only women carry pitchers in the East, so that this man could be easily marked. When the day came, Jesus told Peter and John to go into the city and to watch at the gateway till they saw the water-carrier, to follow him, and to enter the house at which he stopped. They were to say to the owner of the house, "The Master saith, 'Where is my guest-chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?'" Judas strained his ears, but there was no clue to show him or anyone else which street or which house was meant.

Peter, the leader of the twelve, and John, the beloved disciple, obeyed Jesus unquestioningly in what He commanded. They had not long to wait at the gate before they saw the man coming with his water-jar. They followed him carefully through the narrow streets, where now and then the thronging, jostling crowd almost hid him from their eyes; and at last they entered the house and made their request. The unknown

friend led them to a large upper chamber, and here they found the table spread and the couches arranged for the feast. Nothing remained for them to do but to bring the unleavened bread and the lamb which had been slain in the Temple, and return to tell the Master that all was ready.

Who was this unnamed friend? We can only guess, but another nameless lover of Jesus appeared on the evening of the same day, and through him we gain a clue.

When it was night and the full moon had risen, and the last tender words of farewell had been spoken in the upper room, Jesus led His Apostles to the familiar garden of Gethsemane, where they had often rested and talked together, and there He endured the bitter agony which the sin of the world had laid upon Him. Then came the trampling of many feet, and He had hardly time to awaken the eleven from the heavy sleep of weariness and sorrow before Judas, leading a band of soldiers and of Temple guards, came beneath the gnarled branches of the olive trees to capture Him. Every disciple fled. The chosen three, Peter and James and John, had failed to keep the vigil with Him, and now

even John, who loved Him most and understood Him best, left Him alone.

But as the soldiers were leading Jesus away they saw, flitting through the broken shadows of the garden, a figure clothed in white. Who could it be? Fearing an attempt to rescue their prisoner, a few of the guard gave chase, and laying hands upon the white garment made sure that they had secured their capture. But as they grasped the sheet, for the garment was nothing more, its owner slipped from their hands and fled half-naked among the olive trees. The soldiers lost track of the fugitive and returned to their commander, only able to say that it was a young man whose face they could not see. Who was this second friend without a name who hovered near Jesus in the hour of captivity, but fled rather than be taken?

Clearly it was someone who had been suddenly roused from sleep, and instead of waiting to dress, hurriedly wrapped the coverlet of his bed around him like a loose cloak. We think it must have been the son of the house in which Jesus kept the Passover.

Jesus had dismissed Judas before He

celebrated what we call the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as it was not fitting that a traitor should be present. Judas, whom not even the sacred hour in the upper room could turn from his purpose, hurried forth, a lost soul, to betray the movements of his Master to the chief priests. Before long a band of soldiers was secured to aid the High-priest's servants in the capture of Jesus, and Judas no doubt led them at once to the house he had so recently left. But the upper room was empty. The traitor then lost no time in leading his band on to the garden of Gethsemane, which he knew to be a favourite halting-place of Jesus.

Now, we think that the son of the house, roused from sleep by the trampling of many feet, and guessing the purpose of the soldiers, leapt from his couch in hot haste, and hurried on their track in the hope that he might be able to warn Jesus. He had cast about him the first covering he could find, and as the white sheet formed a good disguise in the bright moonlight, he escaped the notice of the soldiers, but he dared not pass them, either fearing to miss their destination, or having lost his courage by the way. So after all he was

too late to give warning. But he still lingered half hidden by the gnarled trunks of the olive trees, until his white dress was discovered against the darkness of the grove, and he was compelled to flee.

We think further that this young man was none other than Mark, in whose Gospel alone this story is told. From the book of the Acts of the Apostles we learn that Mark lived with his mother, who bore the familiar name of Mary. She had a large house which was quite a centre for the early Christians. When Peter was delivered from prison and from death by means of an angel—as you will read in a later chapter,—and he did not know where to go in the darkness, we learn that after he had considered the matter he turned to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. Clearly her house was a meeting-place, where one could be sure to find some of the other believers in Jesus.

It seems probable, then, that hers was the house where the Apostles and their friends gathered at the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Very likely it was here also that Jesus kept the Passover with His Apostles.

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In that case, its owner who welcomed Jesus so readily must have been Mark's father, or Mark himself if his father was dead; and the young man who fled in the garden must have been Mark. This would explain why that story is only told in his Gospel and not in the other three narratives, for, of course, he could never forget how near he was to Jesus on that eventful night, and could not refrain from telling what had then happened to himself.

We hear of Mark later, and find that he was just the same kind of man as the unnamed youth in the garden, brave at the beginning but apt to grow faint-hearted in the middle; very hot at first but easily yielding to a cold fit. For when the great Apostle Paul and his friend Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey, Mark went with them to be their attendant and to help them in every way he could. It was a great honour to be chosen to go with these two soldiers of Jesus Christ, and in the beginning he was brave and helped them as they desired. They first stayed in the beautiful island of Cyprus, where Barnabas, who was Mark's uncle, had had estates and knew many people.

ST. PAUL AND ST. MARK

From the picture by DÜRER, in the Munich Gallery.
Painted 1526.



Next they set sail for the coast of Pamphylia, on the mainland, and when they landed, Mark's courage failed him and he turned back to Jerusalem. It was indeed a hard, strange road which he was called to travel, over lofty mountain passes, at risk of robbers, with few comforts. But it was cowardly to turn back in the middle of a journey, and very unfair to Paul and Barnabas, who could not find a new helper in a heathen town. Perhaps Mark missed the comforts of his mother's home; perhaps he feared that he would lose his life. In any case, just as it was with the man in Gethsemane, so it was with him. He fled when his work was only half done. He was a hero half his journey and then a coward. Nicodemus began by being a coward and afterwards showed himself a hero. Mark began by being a hero and afterwards showed himself a coward. But he was not a coward to the end of his days.

When Paul and Barnabas were ready to go a second missionary journey, Barnabas wished to give his kinsman Mark another chance, but Paul would not welcome back so soon one who had deserted in the hour of peril. Barnabas, on his side, would not leave Mark

behind, so this friendship between the two missionaries was broken. Paul chose another comrade, and Mark went with Barnabas to Cyprus, where he had been safe and comfortable before. But that is not the end of his story.

Long afterwards Paul wrote from prison to the people of Colosse that Mark was with him, and was one of "the men who are a comfort unto me." Later still we read in a letter to Timothy a request to bring Mark, "because he is profitable for the ministry," so that the very work which Mark had once done so badly he had at last learnt to do well. And in the end he wrote an account of the Lord Jesus, which has done much to teach the multitudes for nearly two thousand years to know and love the Saviour.

He who puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ grows strong to conquer his faults. The courage which used to snap like a lath of wood becomes strong as tempered steel under the influence of the hero-spirit of Christ.

And when we count up the friends of Jesus in the world to-day, we must never forget that there are not a few, unmentioned in the records

of the churches, and unknown save to God and to those who love them best, whose names are written in heaven. They will be welcomed there, for they too have provided a guest-chamber for their Lord, and that guest-chamber was their heart.

CHAPTER IX.

CLEOPAS AND HIS COMRADE.

WHEN Jesus had given up His life upon the Cross, His declared followers in the whole of Palestine only amounted to five hundred, and those in Jerusalem did not number more than about one hundred and twenty. They seem very few when we remember the crowds who had followed Him and listened to His teaching. They were just a drop in the ocean at the Passover time in Jerusalem, when hundreds of thousands gathered year by year to the great feast, and the streets were thronged not only with the people of Galilee and Judæa, but with Jews from Greece and Italy, Egypt and Babylon.

Still it is clear that Jesus must have had a number of friends besides the Apostles and those

of whom you have already heard who lived in Galilee or near Jerusalem, and that there were others who did not live in Palestine at all, but came up occasionally to Jerusalem to be present in the Temple at the great Festivals. These had heard Him speak at such times and had believed on Him and made themselves known to Him. We catch one glimpse of two such friends of Jesus who were well known to each other.

It was on the first day of the week, our Sunday, immediately following the Friday on which Jesus had been slain, that two men might have been seen leaving Jerusalem by the gate on the road leading to Emmaus. They had an eight-mile walk before them, across hills and along valleys, which became more and more barren and thickly strewn with stones as Jerusalem was left in the distance. The sombre landscape suited their sad thoughts. The mere passer-by could see at a glance that they had suffered great sorrow and that a heavy anxiety still oppressed them. They were deep in conversation as they left the city behind them, and they were evidently discussing things upon

which they could not agree. Gloom settled yet more deeply upon them as they talked.

Suddenly they became aware of a stranger at their side. They had not heard his approach, and they thought he would pass by with no more than the word of greeting travellers were wont to exchange. But he joined them, entered at once into conversation, and, with a directness that must have startled them, asked, "What words are these that ye exchange one with another as ye walk and are sad?"

There was so much sympathy and friendliness in the voice and manner of the newcomer that they did not dream of resenting the question, and one of them, whose name was Cleopas, exclaimed at once, wondering that he did not guess of what they were speaking: "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which are come to pass in these days?" Then he asked again, "What things?" Surely, thought the two friends, this man must be without any friend in Jerusalem, or he would have known what had stirred the whole city to the heart. And they both began to pour forth the terrible story, so eagerly and so rapidly, that it was plain they

could think of nothing else, each one interrupting and completing the words of the other.

What things? “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel.” Either grief had made them so reckless that they condemned the leaders of their nation openly, or perhaps something about the stranger made them in spite of themselves show him all that was in their hearts. They drew breath when they had told of their great hope, and then went on sadly: “Yea, and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb and found it even so as the women had said; but Him they saw not.”

The excitement of the story faded from their

faces as they said these last sad words: "Him they saw not." They were lost again in the dejection of their own thoughts. These were not men to catch at any straw. They must be sure, absolutely sure that He on whom they had set their hopes was really living before they would let themselves take any joy in the thought.

But their dark meditations were quickly broken. Like a strong life-giving wind, blowing the thunderclouds before it, the voice of the stranger sounded in their ears: "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

By this time the speaker had fallen into step with the two friends, and began at once to explain to them the promises of God in their Bible in a more wonderful way than they had ever heard. From Genesis to Malachi, from the Psalms, from all the great prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—text after text was quoted, thread after thread of teaching was drawn so clearly that the listeners could not fail to follow, and all went to show that it was the great pur-

pose of God that the Messiah, His messenger to Israel, should be not a warlike conqueror surrounded by the splendours of the world, but the servant of all, and One who, by suffering the most bitter death, should gain the victory and become the promised Saviour of mankind.

How quickly the miles sped past as the old Bible they had so often heard became a new book to them, and they saw that Jesus in dying upon the cross had but fulfilled the prophecies of the Scriptures and had done the will of God perfectly.

The landscape changed as they neared Emmaus. The valley was green and fertile, here and there the pink almond blossom brightened in the glow of the sunset, and passing through vineyards and olive gardens, they came to the gate of the little town. There was as great a change in their minds. No longer were they like storm-swept rocky slopes but like the sunny valley filled with the flowers of hope.

The two companions were to pass the night in the village, apparently at the inn, and as they neared the door the stranger was about to leave them with some words of farewell. But they

could not bear to think of parting so soon from such a teacher. Eagerly they besought him to spend the night with them, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." He yielded to their request, and they were soon seated at the evening meal, the place of honour at the head of the table being given to their guest.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The stranger took the loaf, and after a brief prayer broke it and gave a portion to each. Perhaps in the action of breaking the bread the marks of the nails were for the first time apparent, or perhaps something in the words of the prayer revealed the truth, for in that moment their guest stood disclosed to them as none other than the Lord Himself. The Christ they had mourned as dead had been their companion and teacher throughout the hours of that afternoon. But before they could utter one word of rejoicing, or fall at His feet to adore Him, He vanished from their sight. The door was unopened, but His place was vacant. Yet they were sure it had been no vision but the Lord Himself, for did they not still hold in their hands the bread He had broken.

When the first moment of amazement was past, they turned to one another and said, "Was not our heart burning within us while He spake to us in the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" They wondered now that their eyes had been so blind to the Master; but they need not have wondered, for it had been His will that they should not know Him till the breaking of bread.

Why was this so, and why at the moment of recognition did He vanish so mysteriously? Their eyes were holden that He might convince them from the Scriptures before convincing them by His known presence. He wanted them not only to be sure that He had risen from the grave, but also to know that the sad story of His suffering and death was God's chosen path for the Messiah and led at last to victory. To some, indeed, He first revealed His presence and then taught the things that were necessary for them, but to these the teaching came first. And He vanished from their sight, that they might learn to trust Him when unseen, and to feel that He was not one whit less real when their hands could not touch Him nor their ears hear His voice.

They had learned their lesson; they knew now with a certainty nothing could shake that their Lord was risen indeed, and in that very hour they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the good news to the Eleven.

Who were the two friends to whom Jesus gave these long hours of the first day of His risen life? We know that one was called Cleopas. It is a Greek name, and not common among the Jews. We therefore think he may have been a Greek by birth who had become a Jew, and came to know Jesus by contact with Him and His Apostles at the Jewish Feasts. And his companion? Strangely enough, although this story is told so vividly in the Gospel of St Luke, his name is not given. But because the narrative is so full and occurs in this Gospel alone, there are some who hold he was St Luke himself. This would explain why no name is mentioned.

If this be so, then each of the four Evangelists touched the life of Jesus. Two were Apostles, Matthew and John. Two were unnamed friends; Mark the fugitive of Gethsemane, Luke the companion of the journey on the Resurrection

Day. At that moment, it may be, the desire was kindled in Luke to write the story of our Lord's life.

But whether or not the second traveller was Luke, we can learn that Jesus is willing to be the third friend in each true friendship, blessing and enlightening all true comrades as they walk together in sorrow or in joy. He often comes in hidden ways. We may fail to recognise His voice or His teaching in the sweet influences and precious opportunities of our lives unless we bid a hearty welcome to all good voices and use gladly all chances of kindness. Then in the evening hours of life, and in the sunset of our final day, the veil will drop, our eyes will be opened, and we shall perceive that oftentimes the Saviour in whom we trusted had been with us though we saw Him not.

But if we do not bid Him welcome He will pass from us into the night. It will not be night to Him—but to us the great darkness. He will not be with us in the breaking of bread, we shall not hear Him call our name in the Great Day.

CHAPTER X.

ANDREW THE HIDDEN HELPER.

WE honour Andrew as the first disciple of our Lord. When the fame of Jesus as healer and preacher was spreading far and wide through Palestine, and crowds followed Him, and His name was upon every lip, it was not difficult for a man to declare his decision to become a disciple. At least no one would laugh at him or call him credulous. But when Jesus was alone and quite unknown, when He had as yet neither preached nor healed, and when the only evidences of His greatness were the truth and love shining in His face, and the power and grace of His words, no one but a very spiritual man would dare to declare his belief in Him. Andrew dared. That is his chief glory.

He came from a town called Bethsaida, that

ST. ANDREW

A detail from the picture of "The Madonna and Child Enthroned" by CARLO CRIVELLI, in the National Gallery, London. Painted 1476.



is "Fisherhome," lying just where the Jordan rushes into the Sea of Galilee. He had spent all his days beside the lake, and from childhood had learnt to row and fish and sail, growing up active and bronzed with the vigorous open-air life. But his occupation did not completely fill his mind. Often in the long hours of the night, while he watched beside the nets and saw the stars flickering in the moving waters beneath him, anxious thoughts arose in his mind concerning his poor conquered country, the promises of the prophets, and the sin that went on about him, and with which he, too, had to struggle.

When at last John the Baptist's trumpet voice sounded through the land, Andrew heard it readily. "Repent!" This truly was a word the nation needed to hear and lay to heart. He would leave his fishing-boat for a time and learn what further the preacher had to say. Two days' journey down the Jordan valley he went to the place where John was baptizing, listened, was baptized, and became his disciple, from that moment dividing his time between his trade in Galilee and his master John. Whatever

Andrew felt to be good he knew to be of God, accepted it and was content.

Yet a greater moment was to arrive for him. Jesus Himself had come down from Nazareth and had been baptized, and then had gone into the wilderness, and for forty days had wandered fasting and alone, and had suffered and overcome the three temptations with which the Evil One sought to overthrow Him. Then He appeared again where John was preaching, and found Himself a shelter by the riverside, where He could rest at night.

Here, where John had been preparing people for His coming, was the fitting starting-point for His ministry, but He did not immediately begin to preach, lest He should appear as a rival. Although the Holy Spirit had fully and visibly descended upon Him, and the forty days' fasting and prayer had prepared Him for His work, He waited until John himself should declare the presence of the Messiah, and tell his followers that the Leader of whom he had so often spoken was in their midst.

John was preaching by the riverside, surrounded by a little crowd, when he suddenly became

aware of Jesus coming towards him. A great joy seized him, and he cried "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and went on to tell his hearers that this, at last, was He of whom he had spoken.

Again the next day, as he was standing with Andrew and another of his disciples, whom we believe to have been John, afterwards the Apostle of Love, Jesus passed by, and the same words rose to the Baptist's lips, "Behold the Lamb of God."

Struck by the significance and solemnity of their teacher's tone, the two disciples began to follow Jesus at a little distance, wishing to speak with Him, but not knowing how to begin. At length, hearing their footsteps, He turned and asked, "What seek ye?" The question was one they could hardly answer, but it gave them an opening, and they said, perhaps a little awkwardly, "Where dwellest thou?" Jesus answered, "Come and see." He meant more than to make them welcome to His shelter beside the river. It was as though He said, "Come and learn of me, come and know me." They followed Him eagerly and stayed with Him hour

after hour into the night, listening to Him^w and learning new and beautiful things, until they were able in some measure to understand the Baptist's meaning when he had cried "Behold the Lamb of God."

Andrew is a Greek word meaning "manly, vigorous," and was well suited to the first disciple. No sooner had he returned from talking with Jesus than he hastened at once to find his brother Simon, and told him the glad news in one short sentence, saying, "We have found the Messiah"; and Simon, who had also been hoping for the coming of the Redeemer of Israel, heard with joy and confidence, and was ready to go at once with his brother to Jesus. The Master looked upon him with profound and searching eyes and said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas." Cephas means "rock," and the Greek word being "petros," Simon is known to us as Peter the "rock man."

This was perhaps the most important thing Andrew did in his whole life. Peter, as you will hear, became the leader of the disciples, the foremost in speech and work. He often said and did things that were impossible to Andrew, who

was quieter and less talented ; but Andrew has the abiding honour that he brought his gifted brother to Jesus, and so won for our Lord His most famous Apostle. Jesus needed the help of his silent, little known disciples. He asks the same to-day. You may have seen a stately four-masted ship come sailing up the English Channel, and as she nears the harbour, a little steam-tug casts a hawser on board and pulls her safely into her place in the dock. The tug would be swamped among the great Atlantic rollers in which the big ship rides at ease, but the big ship cannot make the harbour safely without the tug's aid. There is need in God's great world and in the kingdom of heaven for the hidden helpers like Andrew.

A good many months go by before we hear much more of Andrew, and then we see another side to his character. Jesus had been teaching the people nearly two years, when one day He found Himself surrounded by a great crowd on the grassy land near Bethsaida, Andrew's birth-place. He had meant to have a time of peace and quiet with His disciples, but the people of Capernaum and other of the lakeside cities had

observed His going and had hurried after Him. When Jesus saw this great multitude, and knew that many had come a long distance and had brought no food, He had compassion on them and determined that they should not be sent away hungry. He was thoughtful for the bodies as well as for the souls of men.

To feed such a great multitude He must use His miraculous power, but He wished to test and to train His disciples, and turning to Philip, of whom you will hear more in the next chapter, He asked him, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?" It was almost a playful question, for there was no place near them where food could be bought, but Philip took it quite seriously, and began to calculate. Five thousand people, and to each a fragment of barley bread, and the barley loaves bought at the cheapest price, would one hundred silver pence be enough? No; at least twice as much (about six pounds in our money) must be spent if everyone is to have even a little. So Philip answers laboriously, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, that everyone may take a little."

Andrew, who stood near and overheard, was

quite as serious but more practical. He looked round to see if there was anyone carrying food in any quantity. He may have remembered the miracle of Elisha, who fed one hundred men with only twenty barley loaves and some new ears of corn. At any rate, no sooner did his eyes fall on a boy carrying some food than he said to Jesus, "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are they among so many?"

Andrew did not understand how Jesus was going to feed so many people, but he thought it at least worth while to consider what there was to begin with. His hint was of service, while Philip's calculation was useless. Jesus made this little store to grow until it fed the whole multitude, hungry though they were with the journey and the keen air. After He had prayed, He broke the bread and portioned the fish, and sent His Apostles to feed the people. All had as much as they could eat, and yet there was more at the end than at the beginning, for of fragments alone they took up twelve basketful, and at first there had been only one basket and five loaves and two fishes.

We can see that Andrew was always on the watch for the next thing to be done. His words were few; his actions, when he saw clearly, were prompt. He did not complain because he was not of the little inner circle whom Jesus often drew apart from the rest, and of whom one was his brother Simon Peter, but he kept on the alert, ready to serve in the smallest and humblest way the Master he adored. There are some people who will not begin to work for God unless they see everything clear from start to finish; some who will not give at all because they can only give a little; some who will not struggle at all because they are so weak. Our Lord can make little use of such. But anyone who is willing to begin to work, meeting the difficulties as they come; anyone who will give what he can, however little it be; anyone who will struggle to take one step, even though another seem impossible; anyone who will do his best, is the truly practical and helpful man. Render your little; the Lord will give the great result.

Again there is a silence of months, and we never hear Andrew's name mentioned. But

before the death of Jesus the light of history falls upon Andrew twice again, and gives us two more glimpses of his strong and thoughtful character.

This was the first occasion. On one of the last days of Jesus' life He was in one of the enclosures which surrounded the Temple. There were several of these 'courts,' as they were called, round the central building, and people who were not Jews by birth were allowed to come into the outermost, but dared not, at risk of life, intrude into the next one, though a Jewish man or woman might enter at will.

A number of Greeks who had given up their own religion because they had come to believe in the true God were in Jerusalem for the Passover. They heard the name of "Jesus" on many lips, some speaking in praise and some in condemnation. Filled with curiosity, and longing to see Him for themselves, they came up to the Temple to find Him. When they reached it, Jesus was in the inner court, into which they dared not venture. What was to be done?

Fortunately they came in touch with Philip, and knowing him to be a disciple, said, "We

would see Jesus." Philip could not make up his mind whether to tell Jesus of their wish or not, and in his difficulty determined to consult another apostle, choosing Andrew. We do not know why Andrew was chosen, except that he was the only other apostle besides Philip who bore a Greek name, and he may have known the Greek language particularly well. But what strikes us is that Andrew had no difficulty in making up his mind. He was prepared to take the responsibility of bringing these foreigners to Jesus. The Master had declared that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but Andrew read Him aright when guessing that the visit of these earnest inquirers would be most welcome to Him. And so it was. For to Jesus they seemed as the first trickling stream which heralded the mighty rivers of people who from all parts of the earth would be drawn to Him as their Redeemer.

So we learn another thing about Andrew. He was not afraid to decide a question and undertake responsibility and risk disapproval. Here again he had served his Master aright.

The last time we see and hear this Apostle we

learn that he was not only the practical man, but had another side which saved him from shallowness. As the little company left the Temple one afternoon, Jesus had prophesied that the day would come when its ruin should be so complete that not one stone should be left upon another. They crossed the valley of the Kedron, and ascending the Mount of Olives, sat down for a little, with the wonderful building right before their eyes. We can imagine the scene. The sun was about to set and the sky was filled with ruddy fires, while the hills lay indistinct in a purple gloom. Every pinnacle of the Temple roof shone like a jewelled spear, and the marble was dyed a luminous rose. Deep in the shadow lay the mighty foundations, a miracle of enduring strength.

As Jesus rested upon the hillside, four of the Apostles approached Him to ask a question. Three of them were those, who formed the little inner circle, most often drawn apart by the Master—Peter and James and John. The fourth was Andrew. Surely the reason why Andrew was for once joined to the three must have been that the question they were about to put had been suggested by him.

“Tell us,” said they, “when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to be accomplished?” The rest of the Apostles had let the startling words of Jesus, that the Temple would be utterly destroyed, pass out of their thoughts; but Andrew and the three kept turning over the strange, sad saying, and wished to know more. The disaster to the city might be so far off that it could have nothing to do with them and could not alter their way of life in the smallest degree, but they wanted to understand all they might of the purposes of God.

Clearly, Andrew was not one of those men who despise everything deep, mysterious and far away. He had profound thoughts and an interest in the far-off plans of God, as well as a ready hand for the next task and a quick mind for the next step.

This Apostle is particularly attractive to some, because he was chosen as the patron saint of Scotland, and one of its university towns is called after him. It is curious to notice how the good features we have seen in his character markedly reappear in Scotsmen. Andrew sought first of

all Peter his brother; they, too, are very clannish, loving their own folk best, and when they are Christians, eager to train and win their children and kinsmen for Christ. Again, Andrew was quick to notice and bring forward the little supply of food, scanty though it was ; and many Scotsmen have begun as students with a very light purse and few advantages, but because they used what they had and gave it into the hands of their Lord, they have risen to high place and have done great work for Him. Scotsmen, too, like Andrew, are always ready to bear responsibility and to come to decisions, and they are often marked by their interest in the obscure and remote questions concerning God and men.

In this way you may find it easier to make a picture in your mind of the character of this Apostle ; and though you are hidden in some corner of life, and are not clever, and cannot hope to be great, you must remember that our Lord needs many Andrews as well as some Peters and some Johns. You may do work like Andrew. You, too, may gain His blessing, and be known to our Lord, if to no other, as one of His hidden helpers.

CHAPTER XI.

PHILIP THE COMMONSENSE APOSTLE.

THERE was another disciple who was born in Bethsaida, and of whom you have already heard something. He was called Philip, and bore the same name as the prince of the province in which Bethsaida lay. We do not know whether he was a fisherman or not. Perhaps he was in some business which made him acquainted with the foreigners on the one hand, and with the fishermen on the other. You will remember that it was to Philip the Greeks went when they wished to be led to Jesus. Also, it is plain that he was well acquainted with Andrew, alongside of whom he appears several times. In two of the lists of the Apostles his name is found immediately after Andrew's.

But Philip was very different from his fellow-

townsman. You must have noticed already that he was rather a slow-moving man, laborious and heavy-footed in mind. When Jesus asked him how the multitude was to be fed, he went through a calculation as if he had been ordered to buy bread for them all ; and when the Greek strangers wished to see Jesus, he was so cautious that he could not bring himself to grant their request until he had consulted Andrew. The same characteristics appear in the other incidents in which he played a part.

We meet him first of all on the banks of the Jordan in the company of John the Baptist. I think that Andrew, after bringing his brother Simon to Jesus, attempted to bring Philip too; but that up to the moment of Jesus' departure from the Baptist into Galilee, Philip would not yield. Andrew must surely have told him all that there was to be known about Jesus, for Philip shows that he knows the whole story when he speaks to his friend Nathaniel immediately afterwards.

Still Philip remained unconvinced, and finally Andrew must have gone in despair to the Master; for we are told that Jesus went to seek out Philip and found him. The

Lord spoke only two words, "Follow me." They were enough. The presence of Jesus did more than all Andrew's arguments. Every hesitation vanished at the voice of command from One who so plainly was born to rule. Without a word, he cast in his lot with Jesus. Philip was slow to think and slow to act, but he was very honest and true. He knew the King of men when he saw Him, and obeyed as humbly as Andrew or Peter did.

Philip, too, had a friend to whom he felt he must speak of the new Leader. But he told his news in a very different fashion from Andrew, who had launched one brief sentence at Simon, saying, "We have found the Messiah." When Philip came to his comrade Nathaniel he told everything he knew about Jesus, saying, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." How careful he was to state all the facts he knew: that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, not only of Moses but also of the later prophets; that he came from Nazareth; that the name of Mary's husband was Joseph—everything he laid before his friend.

TWO APOSTLES

A facsimile in miniature of a fresco of the School of Giotto, in the National Gallery, London. Painted 14th Century.



Nathaniel answered with a little contempt, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Apparently Nazareth had a poor reputation among some of the Galileans, perhaps because it was a small upland town, not to be compared with the prosperous cities on the shores of the sea of Galilee, or possibly the people were rough, and not over honest. How did Philip meet the question? He had no great faith in argument; but he believed entirely in the power of what you can see and feel, for it was thus he himself had been convinced. So he simply answered, "Come and see." It was as much as to say, "Well, Nathaniel, it is easy for you to discover whether any good thing comes out of Nazareth. Come and see the Master, and judge for yourself." Nathaniel could not resist this appeal, and came to Jesus.

Thus, though Philip was slow-minded, difficult to convince, and not given to argument, he was a true helper because such a good witness. People might say what they pleased about Nazareth; he had seen Jesus for himself, and he knew Him to be the Messiah. It is largely through men like Philip that the religion of Jesus has become the

greatest religion in the world. Much has been done by those who have argued for the Master ; much more by those whose lives have borne good testimony. It is the martyrs rather than the preachers who make Jesus known. In this way a rather slow-minded man can convince a quick-witted one that Jesus is the Lord.

Nathaniel was more than quick-witted. He was a saint, loving to pray to God at all times, and having a great hatred of anything untrue or insincere. He was startled, as he drew near, to hear Jesus, with Whom he had never before talked, exclaim, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” He asked, in confusion, “Whence knowest thou me ?” Jesus, who had read the pure face, and besides had the power, when it served a purpose, to see and know what was happening out of sight and out of earshot, answered, “Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.”

Nathaniel had withdrawn himself beneath the fig-tree, perhaps to pray secretly, before Philip found him ; and when he heard another speak of something he believed to be known only to God, his distrust vanished.

He cried impulsively, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." "Because I said unto thee, 'I saw thee under the fig-tree,' believest thou?" asked Jesus, with joy in Nathaniel's ready faith; "thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This was a mystical promise of a revelation of the glory of Jesus as Son of God, which some day should be made clear to those that believed. I do not think Jesus would ever have spoken in this fashion to Philip, who would not have understood, and yet it was he who had brought this bright soul to his Lord.

This also, then, may be said for Philip, that somehow there came to him opportunities for serving his Master which did not come to others. It was Andrew who took the responsibility of leading the Greeks to Jesus, but after all it was to Philip the Greeks made themselves known. Why did they single him out? Had they met him in the course of business in Bethsaida, I wonder? or did he speak the Greek tongue better than the other disciples? or was it simply

that there was something about him which made it easy for men to approach him? We do not know; but we can see how simple people can work very effectively in God's service. There are some whom men almost despise, because not clever in mind or prompt in action, who, through their very simplicity, enjoy opportunities of service which others miss.

The last time we hear of Philip is on the evening before the death of his Master, and we see how the old slowness clung to him, and how patiently our Lord taught him to the end. It was at the last Passover, when Judas had gone out into the darkness and the eleven lingered at the table, that Jesus sought to prepare them for the time, so near at hand, when He should be no more with them. He gave a new name to what awaited His beloved beyond the grave, and called it "the Father's house." He told them that there were resting-places for them all, and that He was going thither to make ready for their coming. He added, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He wished to make them clearly understand how they would be welcomed for His sake, and that

all they had to do was to trust to His beckoning and to follow in His footsteps.

There are two methods by which you may guide a man to an unknown spot. You may say, "Take the road that leads to the mountain, and when you have climbed it and come to the valley beyond, you must cross the river," and so forth; or you may say, "You see that man, follow him. He is going to the same place." In the latter case it is the man who is all-important. That is what Jesus meant. He was the way to heaven. Judge, then, of His disappointment when Thomas answered, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how shall we know the way?" Jesus answered patiently, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by me."

Then He went on to tell them that the Unseen was not as dim and uncertain as they thought, for the Father was there, and anyone who had known Him, their Master, had known the Father also.

Here it was that Philip broke in. He was quite befogged by what he had heard. He had learned nothing, and had only become more

confused. He wanted some solid fact, plain to commonsense; then he would be satisfied. So he interrupted Jesus by saying, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

The words saddened the Master. It seemed as though much of His work had been fruitless. Philip had lived three years with Him, and had seen all His love and power and purity, and yet had never understood that in all this he had seen the very nature of God, and that no miracle in the sky or wonderful appearance on the earth could show him more. What greater miracle could there be than that the Son of God should live among men, and by His words and deeds, and very silences, teach them of the Father Himself? Jesus answered reproachfully, though still tenderly, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost not thou know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, show us the Father?"

But Jesus did not answer Philip merely with a rebuke. He knew how faithful His disciple was, and how willing to be impressed by anything real, though so dull in things of the spirit. So He pointed out that Philip had only to open

his eyes to see, that the Father and the Master were one in character and in life. "Believe *me*," said Jesus, "or otherwise believe me for the very works' sake." It was as if He said, "Look at me. Am I not like what God must be? Can you imagine anyone more holy, more loving, more patient than I? You have only to look at my character to know that you are looking at the character of God. But if my character does not convince you, think of all the miracles you have seen. They are too great for human power. They could only be done by God, who is in me, and one with me."

Thus Jesus met this man's difficulties, and tried to show him that there were facts enough, if he would only look at them, to convince him. Philip was quite without imagination, but it did not need imagination to find in the life of Jesus the heart of God.

Some people think that the character of Philip is very like that of the average Englishman—slow to move, steadfast when decided; weak in argument, strong in practical affairs; exact and laborious, hating what is obscure or mysterious; very faithful to Jesus, though there

is so much in the Lord of the Unseen he cannot understand. That is the picture of Philip ; and whether it be the picture of the average Englishman or not, there are at least some who are like this commonsense Apostle. They find much of the Bible a closed book to them ; they are often discouraged when they hear of others who pray so easily, and think so clearly about spiritual things. They only know that they want to be true till death to Jesus whom they love.

If you are a boy like that, you must not lose heart ; for if Jesus chose such a man to be an apostle, clearly He needs the same kind of helper in His church to-day. The plodding, trustful, and steadfast follower, who will obey when he does not understand, has ever been dear to Jesus, who loved Philip as truly as He loved John, the Apostle with the eagle-soul.

CHAPTER XII.

MATTHEW THE TAXGATHERER.

THE Apostles of Jesus numbered only twelve, but though they were so few, they were very varied in character and in past experience. It is true that eleven were Galileans, and only one —Judas the Betrayer—was from Judæa, but some were fishermen and others landsmen. Some had been followers of John the Baptist, others had remained quietly at home until Jesus called them. Some were very sanguine, and one at least was very melancholy. But perhaps no two of the Apostles offered a greater contrast than Simon the Zealot and Matthew the taxgatherer.

The Zealots were a party among the Jews who above everything else were patriots. They hated all things that were not Jewish, and were continually plotting to throw off the Roman yoke.

Naturally, the taxes levied by foreign rulers were most distasteful to them, and were evaded whenever possible. Simon, quite a different person from Simon Peter, Andrew's brother, had once shared these opinions, but was won over by the teaching of Jesus to see that it was more important to fight against sin than against the Romans, and that a man could only love his country in the highest way when he had learned to love holiness first.

Matthew was so far opposed to the Zealots that he had accepted the Roman rule, and was engaged in collecting the very taxes that were so hated. A powerful magnet will attract to itself objects of all shapes and sizes, for instance a dagger and a pen, if only they are made of steel or iron; in like manner Jesus attracted all kinds of men so long as they had the one sovereign quality of earnestness.

Matthew means "gift of God," and was probably a new name given by Jesus when He called him to be His disciple. His old name was Levi, seeming to show that he belonged to the tribe of Levi, and in that case he would be especially unpopular with the Jews for having

turned aside from the work of the Temple, which naturally fell to the priests or Levites, to take up a profession which seemed to them nothing less than disgraceful. The taxes, which went to the Roman emperor, and defrayed the cost of the foreign soldiers who held Palestine for the Roman rule, were the very badge of tyranny to the strict Jew, who counted that man a renegade who took up the business of collecting them.

No taxgatherer was allowed to worship in a synagogue, and in this respect was more of an outcast than the leper, who, though forced to occupy a place set apart, was still permitted to worship with his fellow-countrymen. No good Jew, however poor, was allowed to take an alms from even the wealthiest taxgatherer. They were, in fact, treated as social outcasts, and, as always happens, a good many took their revenge by doing their work in a very unpleasant way, and by seizing every opportunity to extort more than was due. But some of them were quite honest and did their work as kindly as possible, and it is difficult to see why it should be wrong to collect taxes which very few Jews considered it wrong to pay. But honesty did nothing to mend

matters in the eyes of the Pharisees, who held them condemned by God as surely as by themselves.

The land-tax and the poll-tax had to be collected from door to door, but this was not Matthew's work. He was a custom-house officer. When goods were taken into a town a certain charge was made, and you can understand how irksome it was for a merchant to unload his goods and have them examined. And if the men who undertook this work were ill-natured they might rummage through his baggage, giving him endless trouble, and end by extorting too large a sum. Capernaum, where Matthew collected dues, was a very important centre, for not only was it on the main road running from the ancient city of Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea, but it lay on the borders of Galilee and the neighbouring province of Tra-chonitis. Besides, it was on the Lake, and all goods landed here would have to pay toll also.

Matthew's post was down near the harbour, where Jesus often spoke to the crowds that gathered out of the narrow streets. Sitting in front of his booth, in intervals of work, he must

have been able to listen to our Lord, and he soon saw how different was His teaching from that of the Pharisees.

He learned that Jesus did not shut any man out of the kingdom of heaven because of his business, nor yet admit any man because of his fasts and prayers and his keeping of the ceremonial law which declared certain things unclean.

This able business man, who had often smarted beneath the contempt of the Pharisee who passed him by as if he were no better than the swine, felt his spirit stirred within him as he listened to the words of welcome to sinners, and the call to all men, of whatever class or trade, who would trust and obey. I think he almost made up his mind at this time to become a disciple, but never dreamed that the Master would single him out, and call him, a taxgatherer, to be one of His most intimate friends. That would be too much to expect.

So he went on in the meanwhile with his work, turning over the goods that came in boats or on the heavily laden camels, and noting them in his books, with the amount of money received upon them. No one saw any difference

in him, except perhaps that some found him more than ever scrupulous, and as kind as it was possible to be in his disagreeable work. But Jesus had noted his eager, wistful face, and one day He resolved to do a very remarkable thing,—nothing less than to ask this member of a hated and despised class to be one of His comrades, though He knew that even those who loved Him might not understand, and that His enemies would use it as a fresh opportunity to slander Him to the people.

Accordingly, one morning Matthew saw Jesus pause before his booth, look upon him with kindly eyes, and utter but two words, “Follow me.” Matthew said no word in response, but rose at once from his place. Office, books, and money were all left behind to the care of his fellow-servants. From that hour Jesus was his Master. How powerful were those two little words! But behind the words and the ready obedience lay much more. Jesus read the longing of His new disciple to give himself entirely for the Kingdom of Heaven, and Matthew saw that here was a leader whom he might trust utterly.

Now, why was it that Jesus called such an unlikely man as a toll-collector to be an Apostle? No doubt it would be useful to have at His side one who was skilful with the pen, for only a few Jews had learned to write easily. One of the Gospels was afterwards written by Matthew; and as he was accustomed to make notes in the old days, it may be that he wrote down many of the things he heard his Master say.

But there was a deeper reason for Jesus' choice. He was making plain for all time that He had a message for the despised as well as the honoured, and He could not proclaim it more clearly than by calling one from a disgraced class. Every poor outcast, condemned by the highest of their own people, would see at His side the taxgatherer of Capernaum, and know certainly that the gates of the Kingdom were open to all who willed to enter in.

But of course the deepest reason of all for our Lord's call to Matthew was that he would make a good disciple. He was simple, straightforward, willing to be taught, deeply earnest and full of faith. He was one of those men who,

having given themselves once, give themselves entirely and for ever, without a backward glance.

Now that this great honour and happiness had come to him, one of his first thoughts was a desire to win all his friends for his Master. He had lived a good many years in Capernaum, and was well known to the other taxgatherers and to many of the merchants. Some of them might not be disposed to come simply to listen to Jesus, but if they were asked to a feast, Matthew knew that nearly all would come. So he determined to give a banquet in honour of his Master, and everyone should see that, far from regretting his old employment and the prospect of some day being wealthy, he counted this the proudest and happiest moment of his life.

When the day came, Jesus was the most honoured guest, sitting in the midst of Matthew's old friends, and all could see what manner of man He was, and that perfect holiness has nothing of the spirit of the Pharisee.

But there were some who looked on only to criticise and discredit Jesus. These were strict Jews, who considered it wrong to have intercourse with any who were lax in keeping the

law. They came to the disciples with murmurs against the Master, and talking in this fashion, "So this is your teacher! A holy man, indeed! He sits feasting with men who are driven out from the synagogues, and who care little for the law of Moses."

The disciples found it difficult to meet this gibe, and brought their difficulty to Jesus. He gave them an answer which not only showed the foolishness of the complaint, but made plain the purpose of His ministry. He said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." With delicate irony He asked the Pharisees how they could blame Him for leaving them aside when they were perfectly satisfied that they did not need His help. These taxgatherers and their friends admitted that they were not good; they knew that their souls were sick, and therefore it was only fitting that the physician of the soul should be found with them.

Then Jesus added, in sterner and plainer fashion; "But go ye and learn what this meaneth, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice': for I came not to call the righteous but sinners to

repentance." He longed to rouse the Pharisees to see that God asked love and gentleness and kindness in His worshippers, and it would be more pleasing to Him to see them filled with pity and concern for the sinners, than labouring endlessly to obey not only the law of Moses but also the endless detail of traditional ceremonial, the unwritten law that was so perplexing to those who were unlearned.

He wanted to teach them that if they could see no sin and no cause for repentance in their pride, and in their contempt for those who were not exactly as themselves, then they were standing outside God's mercy, of which all men stood in such great need.

When the feast was over, Matthew left his comfortable home and followed in the footsteps of Jesus, who had no certain resting-place.

It was a great change and brought hardship into his life, and yet never for one moment would he have been willing to return to the old state of things, when he had sat in his booth at the harbour, returning night by night to his house. He could not hope now to grow rich, and at last make his power felt even by those who looked

down upon him. He was despised by many, but bore it with a light heart, for he knew that in reality he was rather to be envied.

He had no high place in the nation, but humbly trod in the footsteps of One who was drawing ever nearer to the Cross, yet with what gladness and quietness of soul he followed, for the same path led to the Kingdom of Heaven. And when Jesus sent forth His Apostles to preach far and wide among the Jews, we can imagine how Matthew sought out the tax-gatherers and all who were held in contempt, and preached the blessed Gospel of the love and concern of his Master for them above all.

And in due time it fell to him to write all he knew of that Master, and so he became one of the four great Evangelists to whom the world looks to-day for its highest lessons.

Our Lord still calls men to His side from the most unlikely places. He has faithful followers among the merchants of the great cities, the sailors on the sea, the miners in the dark coal-pits, the shopkeepers behind their counters. Sometimes still He calls them forth to be His missionaries ; sometimes He bids them work on

for Him in the place where He has set them. And if there are moments when they take up their pens and turn the pages of the ledger a little wearily, because success and a high purpose do not always go hand in hand, they take heart of grace again in remembering that just as our Lord had often watched Matthew at his books, His eyes are upon them also, and for them too is the command, "Follow Me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THOMAS THE MELANCHOLY APOSTLE.

IT may help you to remember the leading characters among the twelve Apostles if you notice that some of them may be compared to different months of the year.

Peter, vigorous and outspoken, with his unaccountable days of weakness, is like the month of March, with its blustering winds and sudden, unexpected lulls. Andrew, so quietly helpful, preparing the way for the work of others, is February, with its early, timid but most welcome snowdrop, and its melting snows, making the land ready for the ploughing and the seed-sowing. John, with his intense still nature, full of love, but apt to break into flashes of anger, is August, with its mellow dreaming days and hours of sudden storm, the most fruitful of all the

months, and seeming to promise change and transfiguration for the days at hand.

And Thomas we may liken to November, the month of brooding mists and fallen leaves and fading flowers, yet holding year by year certain hours of peaceful radiant sunshine, as though some summer day had been captured by the autumn. For, this last Apostle habitually looked upon the dark side of life. He was as weak in hopefulness as he was strong in love. We catch only three glimpses of him in the Fourth Gospel, but they are sufficient to enable us to paint his portrait. There he stands, with his brooding obstinate face and gentle eye; with the bent head and drooping mouth of the naturally melancholy man.

The first time we hear him speak is in Peræa, when Jesus has determined to return to Bethany because of the death of Lazarus. The disciples knew that He had escaped only a few weeks before from the Pharisees of Jerusalem who were seeking to put Him to death secretly. Danger might still remain, but Thomas, who so easily yielded to forebodings of evil, leapt to the conclusion that return meant certain destruction.

He turned instantly to his fellow-disciples, saying, "Let us go also, that we may die with him." There is no lack of courage or of love in these words, but there is a desperate lack of hope. "Well, let us at least all die together,"—that is all Thomas has to say. Yet, as a matter of fact, Jesus was able to visit Bethany and to leave it again in perfect safety.

Again, in Jesus' last long conversation with His Apostles, after they had kept the last Passover together, Thomas is the most disconsolate of all the little company. Jesus had been seeking to comfort them by telling them of the Father's house, His new name for Heaven, and added, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He sees that there are mysteries in the near future, that may well fill them with dismay, and He wishes to make clear the certain light and joy that await them beyond the darkness. Thomas breaks in with a chilling and discouraging declaration of utter ignorance. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" It was like saying: "It is all mysterious to us. The Father's house has no meaning to our minds. What is the

good of trying to understand? All we know is that Thou art about to leave us, and we have no heart for anything else."

He was like a sick child so taken up with the pain he suffers that he will not look at the remedy held to his lips. No wonder Jesus said, a little later, in the greatness of His pity, "I will not leave you orphans." He was about to send the good Spirit, the Comforter, to cherish these men, whose souls were shaken and desolate, like little children soon to be forsaken in a great dark place.

It is after the Resurrection that we see Thomas at his worst and also at his best. On the evening of that glorious day, the Apostles and other disciples of Jesus and the two friends who had hastily returned from Emmaus, were gathered together in Jerusalem. But Thomas was not with them. They were all eagerly telling once more their story of how Mary Magdalene had spoken with the Lord, how the other women had met Him, how He had revealed Himself to Peter, and had walked all the way to Emmaus with Cleopas and his companion—when suddenly He stood in their midst,

and greeted them with the familiar words, "Peace be unto you." He showed them the marks of His suffering in His hands and His pierced side, and, for the sake of some who still doubted whether they beheld more than an intangible vision, He ate before them. All doubts vanished then. His voice was in their ears once more. Joy possessed their hearts.

And where was Thomas? I think he was brooding in some lonely spot over his terrible loss. He had let his grief so master him that he could not bear to be with others. Having lost his Master, he cared little what came to his comrades. He turned stubbornly from their company, and let the black flood of horror go over his head.

Yet he was not forgotten; the others sought him out to tell him of their meeting with the risen Lord. Obstinate he clung to his despair, and answered, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." It was a sad week for his friends. Nothing sufficed to convince him that Jesus had indeed risen from the grave, and had been seen not only by one but by many.

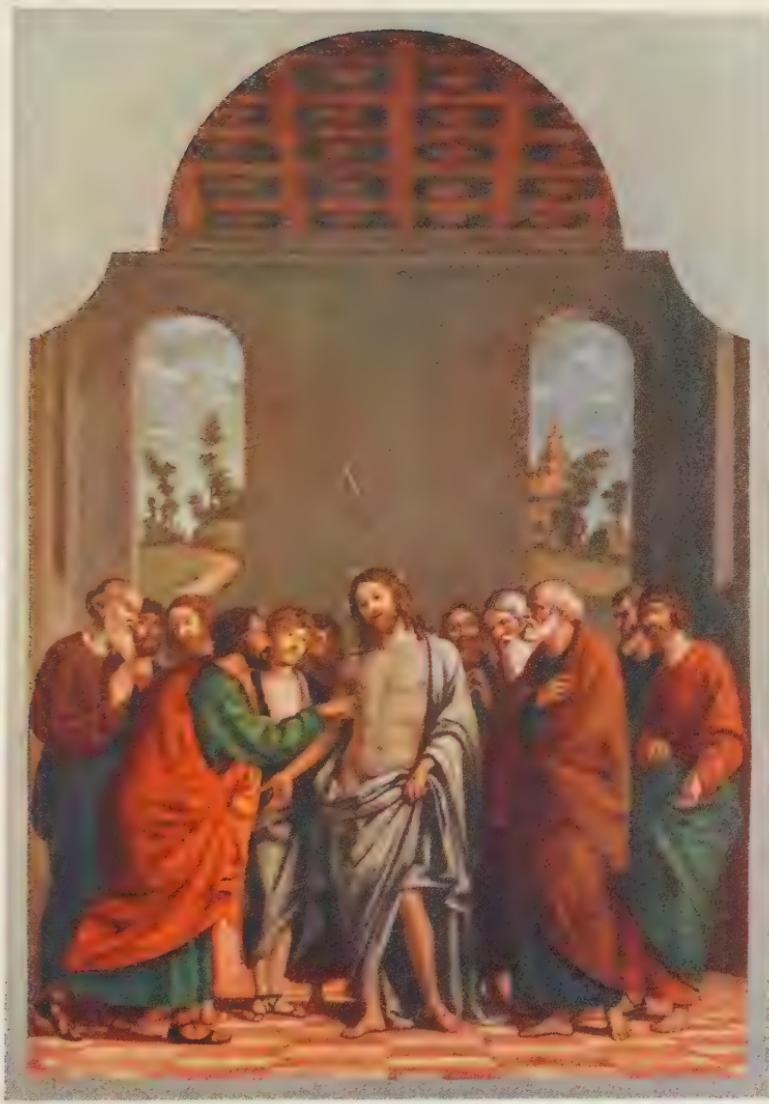
Peter might say to him, "Surely I know my Lord. I denied Him, and in His mercy He sought me out alone. Could *I* be mistaken?" Or John might make one more attempt, saying, "Thou knowest that *I* leant upon His breast. I know His face, His voice, His ways. I could not be deceived." Then the women, with their gentle persuasions, and Mary Madgalene, with her ardent love, would reason with him. All to no purpose.

Thomas would not be convinced. Had he not seen the dead body of his Master, the dreadful wounds, the pierced side? He knew that He was dead. No one should mock him with false hopes.

But the disciples did persuade Thomas to be with them when they gathered together on the first day of the next week. Perhaps they hoped their Lord would appear once more, and they were not disappointed. When all the doors were shut as before, He stood again in their midst, they knew not how, and after one word of greeting, addressed Himself to Thomas. Jesus' first words convinced the doubting Apostle that He had been an unseen listener to his declara-

THE INCREDOULITY OF ST. THOMAS

A facsimile in miniature of the original picture by
CIMA DI CONEGLIANO, in the National Gallery,
London. Painted 1504.



tion of unbelief. He said to him: "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side; and become not faithless, but believing."

Jesus did not refuse to Thomas all the proofs he asked, but He warned him that his encouraged melancholy was weakening his power of belief. Thomas was startled, rebuked, overcome. He had no thought of excusing himself, or even of confessing his sin. His whole mind was absorbed in the fact that his adored Master stood before him. A great awe possessed him, and in that moment the truth came to him that Jesus was not only his Saviour, but his God. He cried aloud, "My Lord and my God," and could say no more.

It was the fullest confession of faith Jesus had ever heard on earth, and yet He could not let Thomas remain ignorant that he had taken the lower way to belief. "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

By these words He wished him to learn that for the spirit there are inward proofs of the Unseen, deeper and more certain than the material proofs

in which alone he chose to trust. Those who have never beheld the face of the Master may be as sure of Him as those with whom He once stood face to face in the flesh. And oftentimes in later days, when Thomas toiled in far lands preaching the love of the risen Saviour, he remembered this saying, and knew it to be true. When the Lord had returned to be with the Father, He was still present as the patient helper of His loving but easily discouraged Apostle.

Our Lord is still full of pity for those who love Him, but who are often haunted by gloom and even despair. He is patient with every child who finds it easier to grieve in loneliness, than to struggle with his sorrow and to forget it in helping others. And to many who have stood by the grave of one they loved, these words have come with the fragrance and the hopefulness of spring, “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.”

CHAPTER XIV.

JESUS AND THE THREE.

WHEN Jesus returned to Galilee after His baptism by John the Baptist, the disciples He had won on the banks of the Jordan remained with Him a little while, and then went back to their homes to take up once more their old occupations. It was not till later that He called them to forsake everything for His sake and to follow Him. It happened in this way.

Jesus was preaching on the sea-shore at Capernaum, and little by little, as the crowd grew, He was pushed nearer the water's edge. Two fishing-boats belonging to James and John and to Simon and Andrew, who were partners, lay at hand. They had been out all night, but had caught nothing, and were now busy cleansing their nets from the weeds and other things that

were entangled in them. As Jesus felt the pressure of the crowd, He called to Peter to push out his boat a little way, and from that strange pulpit He continued to speak until He had finished what He had to say, and the people began to disperse.

Then said Jesus to Peter, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." Peter answered, "Master, we toiled all the night and took nothing, but at thy word I will let down the nets." If there had been no success when darkness hid the nets, it seemed little better than foolishness to make a second attempt with the bright sunshine dancing on the water. But Peter had already learned to trust and obey Jesus.

No sooner had the nets been lowered than a great shoal of fish was enclosed, and it seemed almost impossible to draw them, lest some strands should give way. Peter and Andrew beckoned to their partners, who hastily pushed off in the other boat and came to their help. But even so, the two boats were so laden that there was danger of sinking, and only by a strong effort were they able to gain the shore.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

From the picture by VAN DYCK (1599–1641), in the
National Gallery, London.



When the first excitement of the great haul had subsided a little, Peter realised with a shock of something like terror the awfulness of the power that Jesus wielded in the name of God. No repentance of past sins, no cleansing in the waters of the Jordan, could make him fit for contact with such holiness. He threw himself at Jesus' feet, crying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" But Jesus answered, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

A shallower man than Peter would have been less shaken by the miracle, and certainly could never have read its inner significance. From henceforth he was to be a fisher indeed, but not by night on the blue waters of Galilee. He was to go forth into the world, and in the heat of the day to win and draw and allure men to his Master's side. From that hour the four fishermen left the boats, the old friends and the familiar sights and sounds of the lakeside, and followed Jesus daily, ever learning from Him how best to be His great Apostles, and to cast the net of salvation into the sea of human life.

Now, just as Jesus chose twelve Apostles

from among His disciples, He chose Peter, James, and John, three out of the four fishermen to whom He had given this sign, to be with Him on special occasions. There were moments when He wished to have with Him only those who could best understand Him, and whom He could trust entirely. The other Apostles seem to have borne no ill-will to the Three on this account; even Andrew did not murmur when his brother was put before himself. Twice the twelve disputed as to which among them should be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whatever the Master, who loved them all, thought best to do, was accepted by them quite simply, with a childlike faith.

Once only, as you have already heard, did Andrew join the little inner circle, and that was when he wished to ask a question of Jesus. He seems to have been perfectly content that Peter should outshine him, and his generosity thus revealed is one of his greatest attractions. Peter, James, and John became the natural leaders of the twelve. Peter, as you will soon learn, was the spokesman of the Apostles. John was the mystical genius who understood the very

innermost teaching of the Master. James was one of the earliest martyrs, and it is difficult to give a picture of him, but he was a man of intense and devouring earnestness.

Twice Jesus drew the Three apart with Him because He needed their help, and once because He wished to strengthen their faith, and through them the faith of their comrades.

The first occasion was when He raised from the dead the daughter of Jairus. After an absence of some days from Capernaum, He had scarcely landed from the boat which had brought Him and His disciples from the other side of the sea when a richly dressed man pressed his way through the gathering multitude. He was in great agitation, and throwing himself at the Master's feet, implored Him to come at once to his house, where his only daughter lay dying. It was Jairus, the chief man of the synagogue. Jesus did not delay a moment, but immediately followed with His disciples ; yet progress could be but slow, because of the multitude of people. To Jairus every moment of torturing delay seemed to stretch out to an hour, and at this point there came a further hindrance.

A woman who had spent all her substance upon physicians in the attempt to rid herself of a dreadful disease from which she had suffered for twelve years, had pressed her way nearer and nearer to Jesus. She had heard a great deal about Him, and believed so intensely in His power and mercy that she felt it to be only necessary to touch His garment to be healed at once. She was ignorant, and perhaps superstitious, but her faith was absolute. At last she found herself close to Him, and without a word she stretched out her hand and touched the hem of His garment. In that very moment she knew that she was made whole.

Jesus felt instantly that some one had been healed, and turning to scan the crowd, asked, "Who touched me?" Peter answered, "Master, the multitudes press upon thee and crush thee." Jesus took no notice of this interruption, but said again, "Some one did touch me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from me." Then the woman, trembling lest she had done wrong, fell down before Him and told Him all things. But there was no anger or rebuke for her. Very gently Jesus said, "Daughter"—this is the only

JESUS HEALING THE SICK WIFE

From the picture by VAN DYCK (1599-1641), in
Buckingham Palace.



time we are told of His using this word in speaking to a woman—"Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace."

Jairus had been waiting in an agony of suspense, and just as the movement forward began once more, a messenger came from his house, saying, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." But Jesus, who had also heard the words, was quick to console: "Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made whole."

When they came to the house they found it filled with the hired mourners, and the excited crowd was eager to push through the door to witness, if they might, another miracle; so Jesus left all His disciples, save only the Three, outside in the street, and passed in quickly. Then, raising His voice above the sound of sobbing and wailing, He cried aloud, "Weep not, for she is not dead but sleepeth." He meant that at His will death should prove to be no more than a sleep, from which she should awaken. At these words the noisy grief changed to derisive laughter at one who was so simple as to take death itself to be a sleep.

With a gesture of command He hurried the

mourners from the house, and when it was at last perfectly still, He went with Jairus and his wife and the three disciples into the room where the dead lay. Now that He was alone with those who believed in His power the great deed became possible. He took the girl's hand in His, that at the moment of awakening she should not be afraid, and then spoke two words, "Talitha cumi," meaning "Little one, arise,"—just such words as a Hebrew mother would use to a child to awaken her after the night's rest.

At this simple command the wonder was wrought. The spirit returned once more, and the daughter arose and walked. The hush of a great joy filled the room, till Jesus, turning to the mother, bade her give the girl to eat. He who was Master of the great things thought also of the least. But before He left the house He commanded the father and mother and the three disciples to keep silence concerning the miracle. If once the people began to throng His steps from a mere craving for excitement, they might come with ears deaf to what they most needed.

Thus the Three were able to help Jesus by their faith and by their silence. And though they

returned to their comrades bound not to speak of the wonder they had witnessed, they were so strengthened in their own conviction that their faith was infectious. Through them all the other Apostles unconsciously trusted their Master more.

The second time that Jesus led Peter and James and John apart, it was wholly for their own sakes.

A few days earlier He had told His disciples that His life must end on the cross, and that first He would be rejected, spat upon, and scourged. A dark depression possessed them at these tidings, for they were unable to take the comfort of His closing words when He declared that on the third day He should rise again. For six long days they remained wrapped in gloom. Even the Three had lost courage, and it was very important that they, who had so much influence on the others, should gain fresh hopefulness.

Accordingly, Jesus went apart with them one afternoon, and turned their steps up the mountain side. They climbed till nightfall. The sweet hill air filled them with vigour, and the wide vista of valley and plain that stretched afar to the horizon drew them out of themselves.

But this was the least that they gained on the mountain side. He had come to pray, and purposed that they should be with Him as He communed with the Father.

As the stars shone out and the stillness of the night in that solitary spot enfolded them, they heard Him begin to speak with God. I think courage and calm returned to their souls as they listened and realised afresh that the Unseen, so dim to them, was more real to the Master than the solid earth upon which they trod. But as the hours passed and He still continued in prayer, their eyes grew heavy, and in spite of the chill air they fell asleep.

They were awakened by a light as of the rising sun, and heard strange voices mingled with the Master's. And behold, when they were fully aroused, they saw that it was still night, and that One stood before them in raiment glistering and exceeding white, so that their eyes were dazzled. It was the Master. His face was changed and shone with heavenly brightness. With Him were Moses and Elijah, who were speaking of the death He must die, but calmly and with none of the horror that had seized upon

the Apostles at the thought. And Peter, hardly knowing what he said, but eager to detain these visitants from another world, cried out, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee and one for Moses and one for Elias."

But even as he spoke, a bright mist descended upon them, and they were filled with fear, which grew to terror, as they heard a mysterious voice say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." They fell upon their faces and lay motionless. How long they lay they knew not, but at last feeling a kindly pressure on the shoulder and hearing the voice they knew, saying, "Arise, be not afraid," they sat up and looked about. The fire-filled mist and unearthly figures had vanished, and in the dim light they discerned the Master in His usual dress standing at their side.

They were changed men as they followed Him down the mountain side in the early morning. Sometimes they looked upon Him in doubt, almost wondering whether this were indeed the same as He who had stood transfigured before them a few hours earlier. But in their

hearts they knew the truth, and were tranquil. For a brief moment they had beheld the splendour of the spirit of Jesus, and whatever might come to Him in the dark days that were at hand, the memory would succour their faith.

Once more He strictly commanded them to tell nothing of what they had seen. It was enough for their comrades that they should return among them strengthened in confidence ; and if the people should hear strange rumours of a vision and an unearthly voice, they might be excited to fresh efforts to make Him king. Only to those who understood best was the revelation made.

The third time that Jesus called the Three apart, it was that their love and faith might comfort Him. The night before His death, when He came into the garden of Gethsemane, where He knew He should be betrayed, a great darkness clouded His spirit. He was weighed down by a nameless dread. It was not that He feared to die. For the sake of men He was ready to know death. But the path that led to His death was so horrible. By the treachery of Judas, by the bigotry of the priests, by the cowardice of

Pilate, by the brutality of the soldiers, He was to die.

And there was a deeper and more unspeakable dreadfulness. For in the hour that He should confess the sins of men and make forgiveness possible for all, He knew that the Father's face would be hidden from Him. This was the heart of the agony that possessed Jesus as He entered the olive garden, and the eleven, worn with sorrow, followed Him.

He longed for the presence of those who could understand, however dimly, the thing that was coming upon Him. Too plainly some of the Apostles, truly as they loved Him, could not enter into His thoughts. But the Three who had witnessed His glory and were now witnessing His suffering would surely understand a little. So, leaving eight of the Apostles near the entrance of the garden, Jesus led the chosen ones into the deeper shadows, and said to them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here and watch with me." Alone He must fight the battle, but at least these who loved Him both as comrade and Lord would be watching with Him. It was

as though for the moment His divine strength leant upon them and sought comfort.

Then He passed on a little further, and kneeling down He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” The will of the Father was not yet completely unveiled to Him, and He arose and sought Peter, James, and John. Alas, to their shame, and to the everlasting shame of men, they had fallen asleep. Jesus said to Peter, who had been boasting that day of his faithfulness: “What, could ye not watch one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” He knew that they had not meant to sleep, though they had not struggled as they might to watch with Him.

He went back to His solitary vigil, and it became more and more clear to Him that the awful way was the way chosen of God. He prayed, saying, “Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done.” In His great agony it was as though drops of blood fell from Him in sweat. Again He sought the three Apostles. Surely this time love must

have kept them wakeful—but no. They lay there, heavy with sleep. Neither our Lord's sorrow nor His rebuke could make them masters of themselves.

For the third time He returned to His prayer. The struggle was over now. Every step in the dolorous path was plain to His eyes, and every step was seen to be the Father's will. Once more He said, "Thy will be done," and peace descended upon His spirit. He did not need His disciples now, for an angel, the Father's merciful gift, succoured Him. Even the Son of God could scarcely have trod that path without some one at His side. Where men failed an angel came. But what a bitter thought, that as our Lord girded Himself to save the world by His own unutterable agony, not one human soul kept vigil, weeping tears for His tears, and sorrowing for His sorrow. The Lord had given unto the uttermost to His disciples. There was only a little thing they could give back, and they gave it not.

Presently He returned once more to the sleepers, and as they tried to stumble to their feet, said gently: "Sleep on now and take your

rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Already the lanterns gleamed through the trees, and Judas the betrayer was upon them.

Never in all their lives could Peter, James, and John wipe out that failure from their memories; and if, as some say, martyrdom came to Peter and to John as well as to James, its bitterness must have been joy when they thought on the past shame. It almost seems as though the pain of it must linger through all the gladness of eternity. And yet have we one word of blame? We have never been worn with sorrow such as theirs. Have we not also failed when our Lord has asked us to watch and pray?

CHAPTER XV.

JAMES THE MARTYR.

WHEN Zebedee gave up his two sons to the service of our Lord, I think he made as hard a sacrifice as any of the disciples. It is true that he already employed hired servants to help him with his boats, and he could afford to increase the number, for he was a thriving master-fisherman, but now that old age had almost come, and he was looking forward to dropping the reins of management into the strong young hands of James and John, the loss was very great. The vision of peaceful, leisured hours, soon to be his, faded, and instead he turned his unflinching old eyes to quite another picture, and saw the daily toil lengthening out in a long, narrow vista into the twilight of his years.

It was not a sacrifice of the heroic kind, awak-

ening in us instant admiration, but it was an unending offering of a tired old man's patient labour, made afresh each day, each hour. Neither he nor his wife Salome would offer one word of hindrance to their sons' purpose, and indeed Salome was herself such an ardent disciple of Jesus that pride and joy swallowed up her sense of loss.

She is one of the most striking women of the New Testament. Some suppose that she was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, but if so, the two families can have seen little or nothing of each other, for on the banks of the Jordan Jesus meets John as a perfect stranger. She was a devoted mother, wrapped up in her two sons, and so truly religious that she was able to accept Jesus quite readily as the Messiah. She knew that James and John would be poorer men for going forth in His service, but what of that? Her vivid imagination pictured a glorious future stretching before them in the companionship of Jesus. Her ardent nature and high hopes fed theirs. She herself joined the other women who followed Jesus in some of His journeys, and willingly sacrificed her money to lighten the

weariness and hardships of the way. Yet, as you will hear later, her influence on her sons was not always for the best.

When they were appointed Apostles, Jesus gave them a new name, just as He called Simon, Peter, and Levi, Matthew. But to these two He gave a joint name. They were not like the brothers Simon and Andrew, very different in disposition, but, on the contrary, very similar, and the name which Jesus gave them was Boanerges, Sons of Thunder. They did not receive it because they were so eloquent that their voices sounded like the roar of thunder in men's ears, but rather because of their character and temperament. They were both quiet, reserved men, with very intense feeling, and when they did speak their silence was sometimes broken so suddenly, and their indignation and ardour burst forth so vehemently, that a flash of lightning from a thundercloud was suggested to the onlookers.

James was the elder and the more prominent during Jesus' lifetime, but both, as you have already heard, were of the little inner circle of three, who were with Him at the most solemn moments of His earthly life.

When the time came for Jesus to say His last farewell to Galilee, He made His way slowly up to Jerusalem, choosing to pass through such parts of the country as He had visited but little. Once, at all events, He had passed through Samaria, and had even won some disciples there, and now He determined to return thither.

Although the Samaritans and the Jews both worshipped the true God, the Samaritans were not allowed to enter the Temple at Jerusalem, and had been forced to build one of their own. The feeling had become so bitter that while they did not interfere with Jewish pilgrims passing through their territory, the Jews never asked and they did not offer hospitality.

Our Lord was very anxious to break down the barrier of bad feeling between the two races, and determined to pass the night in a Samaritan village. As there were a good many people with Him, He sent two or three of His disciples in advance to arrange for shelter, so that no one might be inconvenienced by the sudden approach of a large party. But His messengers were sent back with a surly refusal. James and John, infuriated at the insult, cried, "Lord, wilt thou

that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elijah did?" Just a little while before, they had beheld Elijah on the Mountain of Transfiguration, and his example came readily to their minds.

But their Master was of a different spirit from Elijah, who did not know God as the Father. He rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." This saying reminded them that He who had said, "Blessed are the meek," could never use His power for the purpose of revenge. He had come to save men, not to destroy them. Quietly He led the footsore men and women who were with Him across the border to a Jewish village.

The anger of James and John appeals to us, because they were resenting an insult offered to their Master, but their desire for vengeance was contrary to His teaching. I think, too, there must have been in their minds a little of the contempt which Jews felt for those of an alien race. Theirs was not the righteous anger springing from pure love which we sometimes see in our Lord Himself.

A little later the eager nature of the two

brothers was shown not in anger but in ambition. Jesus and His company had advanced from Samaria nearer to Jerusalem, when one day Salome and her two sons appeared before Him with a request. At first they would not say what their wish was. They desired that Jesus would promise to grant it in any case.

But He asked them, “What would ye that I should do for you?” The mother answered for her sons, and they answered for themselves. It was a bold, and also a selfish request: “Grant unto us that we may sit one on thy right hand and one on thy left hand in thy glory.” We cannot help thinking that Salome had been dreaming of her Lord as an earthly ruler, and, with a mother’s ambition, wished to see her dear sons the foremost princes at His side.

There was a double disappointment for Jesus in the question. After all His teaching, one of His best woman friends and two of His dearest disciples still believed that the glory of His kingdom was very like the splendour of the Roman Empire; and, deeper disappointment, two of the chosen inner circle, instead of forgetting themselves, were planning how to

outshine their comrades. But Jesus was very patient. He discerned the high purpose and noble courage hidden by the apparent arrogance of their request.

He said to them solemnly, and a little sadly, “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” With the steadfast look of soldiers called to follow in the forlorn hope, they answered, “We can.” From the Sons of Thunder came the first flash of the martyr spirit, and Jesus offered no rebuke.

In His answer He promised them the high honour of sharing His sufferings, but He could say nothing concerning those who should share His glory: that was in His Father’s hands. He said: “The cup that I drink, ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized; but to sit on my right hand or on my left is not mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared.” James and John fell back among their comrades. They were content with the promise of sharing their Master’s lot. But I think Salome’s courage

failed her. With ashen face she fell to the rear. To her beloved sons was promised the path of blood, but not the rewarding throne.

Was it any wonder if the ten remaining Apostles were moved to indignation against these two ambitious brothers? The fires of jealousy were already kindled, and the good feeling of the little band was seriously threatened, when Jesus called them all round Him. He then explained to them that the true lordship means the most arduous service. In *His* kingdom, the higher a man stood, the more he must do and suffer for those beneath him. Under *His* rule, the glory of high place was exactly opposite to the glory in an earthly empire. Then He showed them that He Himself was the chief example of the true Lord and of the highest glory. These were His concluding words: "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant, and whosoever would be first among you shall be slave of all. For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

James is almost hidden from us for fifteen years

after the death of Jesus. We have glimpses of him, along with the other Apostles, eager in prayer in Jerusalem, and filled with the Holy Spirit after the outpouring at Pentecost. But he was neither a great preacher nor great in arranging the affairs of the churches. His was a different work. Wherever a brave stand had to be taken, a daring word spoken, a burning rebuke delivered, James was ever to be found, with the old fire in his soul, but controlled and purified. In spite of his vehemence, for years his life was spared. Holy Stephen was stoned to death, but James escaped until the year 44 A.D.

Herod Agrippa was then king in Jerusalem, and being eager to please the Jews, resolved to attack the foremost among the followers of Jesus. He did not single out Peter, the most prominent: he laid hold of James, the most daring. It was the Passover week, the very time when Jesus went to the Cross. The hour had now come when James must drink the same cup of pain and be baptized with the same baptism of blood. Just about the time that the Passover lambs were slain for the countless families

gathered in Jerusalem, he was beheaded. His soul, purified by suffering, and cleansed in his Saviour's blood, hastened home to the welcome the Lord has prepared for His own.

James was the first of Jesus' chief friends to reach the heavenly land, the first martyr among the Apostles. His death has given him a place in the thoughts of Christendom which his words would never have won. He was of the true hero race, undaunted, enduring, undivided in his love.

And John, to whom the same promise had been given, what of him? Many weary years he must wait before he could join his brother at his Saviour's feet.

Jesus calls His soldiers home by different roads and at different times, but the summons comes for each at the right hour, and the same welcome awaits all.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN THE APOSTLE OF LOVE.

THE story of John is the story of love: before the Crucifixion, of the love Jesus bore to him; after the Crucifixion, of the love John bore to the mother of Jesus; and after Mary died, of the love John saw in the heart of God, and sought to make known to all men.

Do not be surprised that one of the Sons of Thunder is also the Apostle of Love. It was just because John's nature was so silent and intense that he was able to reflect clearly the mind of the Master. By watching Him, and seeing that love was the beginning and the end of His life, its fountain and its law, he learned to turn all the passion of his own nature into loving-kindness, which grew more and more like his Master's in purity and tenderness and strength.

John was the most gifted of all the Apostles, but if he had not lived to old age, few would have known that he was one of the greatest spiritual geniuses the world has ever seen. He was silent and retiring, and probably the youngest of the Twelve. The Fourth Gospel, which bears his name, only mentions him as speaking on three occasions, and each time very few words were used. At the Jordan he asked Jesus, "Where dwellest thou?" At the Last Supper, he asked the name of the betrayer, saying, "Lord, who is it?" He recognised the risen Saviour on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in the early dawn, and whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord." He tells us more by referring to himself not by name but by description, using the title "the disciple whom Jesus loved." To others, in his Gospel, he gives a crown of higher fame. This little coronet he kept for himself, not for his own praise, but because it revealed so perfectly the amazing condescension and true humanity of the Divine Lord.

Even when we take all the four Gospels and the book of Acts together, there are only three incidents in which he appears independently.

He often acts with his brother James, or as one of the Three, or with Peter, but he never at these times takes a foremost place. Indeed, with Peter, he is in general markedly in the shadow. He was first at the tomb on the Resurrection morning, but Peter was first to enter. He discovered that the seeming stranger on the shore at the Lake of Galilee was the risen Lord, but it was Peter who plunged into the water to go to Him. He was at the beautiful gate of the Temple alongside of Peter when the lame man was healed, but the words of renewing power were not spoken by him. However, the three incidents in which he appears alone, show clearly enough of what spirit and temper he was.

When Jesus was making His last journey from Galilee southwards, John burst into His presence with indignation in his face, and in answer to a questioning look, cried, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." This wonder-worker was some one who believed in Jesus, and by using His name in prayer, succeeded in changing men who were like demons in their words and actions into sane and

gentle people. But he had not joined the body of Jesus' disciples. Therefore to John he seemed to be robbing the Master of honour, and had been instantly and sharply rebuked.

But Jesus had a larger mind as well as a larger heart than His fiery Apostle. He knew that no one could do merciful deeds of healing in His name without being of His spirit. So He only answered, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is for you."

The next occasion was at the Last Supper, which formed the closing portion of the Passover feast as Jesus arranged it. Moses had ordered that the Israelites should eat the Passover standing, but before Jesus' time the rabbis had agreed that it should be eaten reclining in the ordinary fashion, for they declared that standing to eat was the attitude of slaves. Accordingly the disciples were arranged on the couches, not seated, but reclining, their left elbows resting on the table, their right hands free. In this way, each one by leaning back could rest his head upon the breast of his companion on the left, and two could converse without being overheard.

When Jesus disclosed that one of His disciples would betray Him, all the Twelve, including even Judas, cried, "Lord, is it I, is it I?" Jesus made no answer to the eager questions of His friends, for if the betrayer had been named publicly, the other Apostles might have fallen upon him, and the peace of the evening would have been broken. Besides, He wished to give Judas every opportunity to repent, and so long as it was not known that he was guilty, there was still the possibility of confession.

Peter, full of curiosity and anxiety, beckoned to John to ask. John rested his head against Jesus and said under his breath, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered in his ear, "He to whom I shall give the sop," meaning a piece of unleavened bread, with herbs wrapped in it and dipped in sauce, which one guest gave to another. Immediately after these words He handed the sop to Judas, saying, with a piercing glance, "That thou doest, do quickly"; and Judas, casting aside his last chance of confession, hurried out. Only John knew his errand, and John told no one, not even Peter. The tie of love between Jesus and John was so strong that the Master

felt He could trust him wholly. He alone shared the heavy secret for the rest of that sorrowful evening, and it comforted the Saviour that he should know it.

But Jesus was soon to give a higher proof of His perfect confidence in this young and silent Apostle, whom He loved so deeply. As He hung on the cross, He thought of everyone's needs before His own. First He prayed for His executioners, then He comforted the penitent thief with the promise of Paradise, next He cast His eyes upon His mother, who was standing near the foot of the cross with John at her side.

Jesus had cared for her many years, and remembered with tenderness all her ministry to Him as a little child. If He made no provision for her, she would not be in danger of want, for His brothers would care for her as they had done for the last three years. But He knew that she would need not so much a home, as someone who would perfectly understand her, and would never weary of talking of the one subject for which she cared—Jesus, her dear Son and Lord. John alone could meet that need. In fewest words, He bade John make Mary his special charge

ST. JOHN LEADING THE VIRGIN MARY
FROM THE TOMB

A facsimile in miniature of the original picture by
WILLIAM DYCE, R.A., in the Tate Gallery, London.
Painted 1860.



from that day. All the sentences spoken by Jesus on the cross were brief, for to speak at all in such agony of body and soul was added torture. To Mary He said, "Woman, behold thy son"; and to John, "Behold thy mother."

John received the sacred trust, and from that hour cared for Mary as if there were no other. It is indeed a joy to think, that as Jesus was dying, lonely, very poor, in bitterest pain, there was a true friend at His side to whom He could commit her who had given Him life, and whose soul was pierced that day by a sword exceeding cruel.

For fifteen years after Jesus' death and resurrection we hear little of John. In the earliest days of the church he was in Jerusalem and assisted Peter in some of his work. Notably, he went down with him into Samaria, and brought, instead of the fire from heaven he had once asked, the message of the good news of Jesus' love and victory.

After that, for years, nothing is known of him. The reason is plain. He had to be much at Mary's side. Perhaps they returned to well-loved Galilee, so full of associations for her. In

any case, for a while, he had little leisure for the wider work of the church, but the time was not wasted. The words and thoughts of Jesus were ever impressing themselves more and more deeply on his spirit throughout these quiet years. He was not to be the great preacher, or the great miracle-worker, or the first martyr, but the interpreter of the deep things of God. Without this long interval of tranquil retirement, he could not have written as he did.

His first book was the Book of Revelation, which comes last in the Bible. Between thirty and forty years after the Crucifixion, we find that John had left Jerusalem and had gone to Ephesus, a famous city on the coast of Asia Minor, opposite to Greece. Paul had done great work for God there, but, as you will hear in a later chapter, he had died by 65 A.D., and Ephesus, perhaps the most important city as a centre of Christian work at that time, became John's home. After he had laboured there and in the surrounding cities for some time, he was banished to the lonely island of Patmos, lying fifteen miles off, in the Ægean Sea. Here he wrote this wonderful book.

The churches from which he had been torn away were suffering grievous persecution. Some of the Christians had been martyred, others were growing cowardly and cold. The book we call the Revelation of St John the Divine was written to kindle and cheer them. In it are the most beautiful pictures of heaven, and the most terrific descriptions of the fate of those who love evil and disobey God to the end. It is at once the Apostle of Love and the Son of Thunder we find in these pages.

We can see, too, that after thirty years and more, John has not forgotten his first meeting with Jesus. For his favourite name for the Lord of Heaven is "the Lamb of God"; and you remember that when John the Baptist first pointed out Jesus to Andrew and John, he called Him "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world."

But it was not the waters of the Jordan or the green vales of Galilee which he had in mind as he wrote, but rather what met his eye as he gazed from the rocky peaks of Patmos. Sometimes the great winds roared amid its cliffs and the foaming waves cast dead sailors on the shore.

Again, at the dawn, when the night had been calm, the waters, which had looked like glistening oil in the darkness, gleamed like shining glass under the first rays of the sun. Or, in the last light of the sunset, the clouds, low hung, lay along the horizon like ramparts of gold, and the water beneath them, with ever-changing hues, sparkled as if transformed into myriads of jewels.

All these pictures found their way into his book. We read of the winds of God's anger held fast by the mighty angels until the time of judgment fully came ; of the day when the sea will give up its dead ; of the floor of Heaven as a sea of glass, like unto crystal ; of the Holy City, with its battlements of gold, its gates of pearl, and its foundations of precious stones of many colours. And once a sigh escapes him. As he feels himself shut away from his beloved churches by the pathless waters, and surrounded with wickedness, mysterious and unfathomed as the ocean depths, he writes that in heaven "there shall be no more sea."

But the work of the Apostle of Love was not yet done. In due time he was released from Patmos and allowed to return to Ephesus.

Here he laboured into extreme old age, growing ever more and more convinced that the world's great need is love, and that God's great gift is love. He learned also how to use the Greek language more skilfully, for when he wrote his first book he had had little experience in writing. At last, when very old, the stories he had so often told concerning Jesus were written down by his own hand or by the hands of others, and became the Fourth Gospel.

Also, the deep thoughts concerning God, which he had pondered nearly seventy years since he leaned his head on Jesus' breast, were sent forth in the form of a letter, very short, but as precious as if every word were a rare jewel. In it he wrote one sentence, containing only three words, but leading us straight to the heart of the Father. They tell us the greatest of all truths—"God is love."

We do not know how or where John died. But there is a story told of him, not in the Bible but in another book, which is probably true, and helps us to see how completely he had learned to live as he taught. When very old he was sometimes carried by the young men to the assemblies

of the church, and having little strength, he contented himself with saying, "My little children, love one another." Some of his hearers grew weary of the familiar words, and asked him why he always repeated that one sentence. He answered, "Because it is the Lord's command ; and if that is done, enough is done."

So he died, the perfectly loved and the preacher of perfect love. Whether by cruel hands or amid his friends, we know not. But for him, death was the sinking to sleep of a tired child, eager for the sunlit morning and the face of his beloved Lord.

CHAPTER XVIL

PETER THE SPOKESMAN.

PETER was fitted by nature to be a leader and a spokesman, and that of course is why he became the foremost of the Apostles. He was always quite clear as to his own purpose, and never hesitated to express himself; and if perplexed upon any point whatever, he was equally outspoken in his questioning. He never rested till he saw things clearly ; and because of his readiness and even rashness in speech, he received more rebukes than all the other Apostles together, but then he also won the highest praise.

His comrades must often have been grateful to him for giving utterance to what they felt but were unable or afraid to speak, and we to-day have also good reason for gratitude, seeing that

his very mistakes show us pitfalls to be avoided, and his direct questioning has made plain what we might never have fully understood.

To our Lord Himself it must have been a joy to have one among His Apostles so frank that his very faults were never hidden. What Peter thought, Peter said; nothing was kept back.

Was there some parable which the disciples did not perfectly understand? It was he who said, "Declare unto us this parable." Was it a question of conduct upon which they were divided? It was he who asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, until seven times?" When Jesus cursed the fig-tree because it bore no figs among its heavy foliage, it was again Peter who noticed that its branches were indeed blasted. He was always to the front, always vehement in feeling and expression.

Once when Jesus put to the Twelve a very simple but a very searching question, Peter rose to a great height in answering for his comrades. In that same hour he won the dearest praise and the sternest rebuke that ever fell to him.

It was a crisis in the life of Jesus. Since the death of John the Baptist He recognised that the Cross could not be far distant. The Galileans had taken deep offence because He had refused to be made their leader against the Romans, and His disciples saw Him no longer followed by eager and admiring crowds, but deserted, suspected, and even held in derision. Most of them had believed Him to be the Messiah when they became His followers, but their ideal of the Messiah had not been purified, and they still thought of Him as one who would finally restore freedom to the nation. Their faith had passed through a severe trial. Now that they knew His only weapons to be love and truth, and His only kingdom a kingdom in men's souls, did they still believe in Him? This was the vital issue. Hitherto Jesus had asked them no questions concerning Himself, but the time had come for Him to speak of His approaching death of shame and anguish, and first of all it was good that they should confess Him fully. So He led them aside into a quiet place where they might talk together privately.

He did not startle them by at once demanding their thoughts, but began gently. First He asked, using His favourite name for Himself, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" They answered readily enough: "Some say, 'John the Baptist,' some, 'Elijah,' and others, 'Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'" What a strange medley of guesses. Some imagined Him to be John the Baptist come to life again. Others thought He was Elijah, whose reappearing was looked for before the coming of the Messiah. Others were sure that He was some kind of prophet, perhaps Jeremiah, who was so gentle of spirit. But none of the people thought Him to be the very Messiah. He was too unlike what they had been taught to expect by the Rabbis.

Now came the great moment. Jesus went on quite quietly to ask, "But who say ye that I am?" No evasion was possible. His clear eyes were upon them, and a confession, whether of belief or unbelief, must be made. There was only a moment's pause, but it seemed a long time before Peter answered, with the ready voice of conviction, "Thou art the Christ,

the Son of the living God." The Apostles breathed more freely. This was what they believed in their inmost heart, but they had hesitated to put the great thought into words. Jesus praised Peter with joy in His voice, saying, "Blessed art thou Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

He meant that Peter, unaided, could never have learned to expect such a spiritual Messiah, and that no ordinary quality of the mind, such as commonsense, foresight, or knowledge of the world, could have revealed the truth to him. It was because his heart had been open to the teaching of the Father in heaven that he was able to recognise in the Carpenter of Nazareth not only the Messiah of whom all the prophets had spoken, but the very Son of God.

Very few besides the Apostles would have given such an answer; and even of them, one could not. Had the question been put to the Scribes and Pharisees, they would have replied with one voice, "This is not the Messiah." Even those who were most religious would have hesitated and

said, "He cannot be the Messiah." And the common people, who loved Him best, fickle as they were, would now only have called Him a prophet. Peter, standing alone, spoke out bravely the thing he believed, "Thou art the Christ," that is, the Messiah, the anointed One of God.

Then Jesus spoke of the services Peter would render to the Kingdom, and told him that such faith as his would be the strong foundation on which the Church of the ages would be built. Further, He promised to him, what He promised to the other Apostles and disciples after His resurrection, that his prayers would have power to deliver men from sin, and that he would be able to assure the penitent of forgiveness.

After this, Jesus began to tell the Apostles what awaited Him. He pictured the anger and hatred of the elders, chief priests, and scribes. He told of the sufferings to come—scourging, buffeting, spitting, the fetter, the scourge, and the cross which He must carry to the place of crucifixion. But beyond this darkness He set a great light. He promised that He should be raised from the dead on the third

day. His listeners scarcely heard Him. They were filled with horror at the thought of such a death; and Peter at once broke into expostulation, thinking, I suppose, that the Master was filled with dark and needless forebodings, which must be resisted. Using what was very like an oath in his excitement, Peter cried, "God have mercy on thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee." Jesus turned, and with a glance which froze any further words upon his lips, said, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God but of men."

These words, coming so soon after the warm praise so freely bestowed, were like the sudden opening of an abyss at Peter's very feet. That his beloved Master could call him "Satan," the adversary, the devil! Yet this dark title was the true one, for at that moment Satan was as really tempting Jesus as when he had tempted Him in the wilderness, to turn from His work of saving the world by love and suffering.

Then our Lord went on to say that there was some cross for every one of His followers to carry. He did not mean that they would die by cruci-

fixion as He must, but that each must walk in the track of self-sacrifice left by His feet, and seek neither pleasure nor glory, but only to do His perfect will.

Though Peter so often expressed the slower thoughts of his comrades, he was sometimes only spokesman for himself. In his eagerness he would ask, or offer, or refuse to do things, whereas his comrades were quite content to wait for the commands of Jesus. Day by day the Master trained Peter to control himself, and to count the cost of undertaking a task. The warm-hearted Apostle never resented the rebukes he received ; indeed he only loved the more, but he showed himself a slow pupil.

I will tell you of one lesson he received before the great crisis of which I have just spoken, and of another lesson received much later.

When the excited multitudes sought to make Jesus king, after the great miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, He sent His Apostles hurriedly away by boat, lest they, too, should be led astray. They were reluctant to go, but obediently took ship and bent to the oars. They had only advanced a few miles when a storm broke

in fury upon them. The wind blew straight in their teeth, and the waves lashed and tossed the boat so that it was scarcely possible to row. Wet through and weary, they struggled on, until suddenly one of their number discerned through the driving spray a white figure approaching them, walking on the crested waves as easily as if on the grass of the meadow. Fear seized them, and they cried out, "It is a ghost." They could not row for terror. Just then a familiar voice rang across the water and said, "Be of good cheer: it is I: be not afraid." Their hearts leapt up with joy. It was the Lord who had come from His blessed fellowship with the Father to comfort them in their distress.

He drew near the boat to enter it, and all was well. But Peter, gazing on the trackless path by which Jesus travelled upon the waters, was seized with a sudden desire to join Him. Immediately he shouted, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters." Jesus did not forbid His Apostle, but said "Come," for He ever left His followers unfettered in their choices and decisions, and Peter, in especial, could learn some lessons only by making mis-

takes. The Apostle lowered himself from the boat, and for a step or two all went well. But as he saw the waves rise and fall between Jesus and himself, and heard the wind roar, his heart misgave him. Forgetting that he had been encouraged to come, he became afraid, and then at once began to sink. In terror he cried out, "Lord, save me." Immediately Jesus was at his side, and stretching out His hand of power He drew him safely to the boat. It was a very little rebuke which the Master gave, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" He did not blame Peter for foolishness, for He loved to see courage; nor for presumption, for He wished His disciples to confide wholly in Him. Peter's fault was that he ceased to believe, that he let doubt creep in after he had received the word of consent, 'Come.'

On the evening of the last Passover, Peter again stood forth conspicuous, separating himself from his fellow-disciples.

When they had all gathered in the upper room, Jesus noticed that no one brought water for the rest to wash their feet before sitting down to the feast. Generally the disciples took

turns to do this service for each other, but again they had been disputing who was to be the greatest, and had entered the guest-chamber heated and excited with their argument. Now each one felt that if he served the rest, he would be giving up all claim to the foremost place.

Jesus said not a word but rose from His couch, and laying aside His upper garment girded Himself with a towel, and poured out water from the ewer into a basin. Kneeling behind the disciple at the end of the table, He began to wash his feet and to wipe them with the towel. The Apostles were as silent as their Master as He passed from one to the other, but shame filled their hearts when they saw His hands do the work from which they had shrunk.

At last Jesus came to Peter. This Apostle was not silent, but, just like himself, expressed the hesitation in his mind, and asked, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Peter did not pause to consider His meaning, but replied stubbornly, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus wished His disciples to understand that He was not only

washing their feet from sand and dust, but that by His deed He was washing from their hearts the angry, envious, and selfish feelings they had been cherishing. So He answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

Peter at once leapt to the other extreme, and understanding only in part, cried, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus answered, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." He knew that all His disciples save one were true at heart, and had been cleansed by His forgiveness from their sins. He sought to teach them that if we have once received God's pardon, then we need fresh forgiveness only for the sins which daily soil the soul; just as a man whose whole body has been bathed needs no more than the cleansing of his travel-stained feet. But if a man has not been pardoned once and for all, to seek forgiveness for one day's sins is useless. Therefore He said, "Ye are not all clean." This warning was for Judas, but he heard it not.

After these words of Jesus, Peter yielded, and no one was more abashed and contrite than he, as

the Lord knelt before him to do a servant's work. But we see how the words had leapt to Peter's lips ; how vehement he had been, and how mistaken. Yet his faults never exhausted his Master's patience, for Jesus knew that what were faults in the Apostle to-day would be excellences to-morrow, when he had learned to control and to humble himself.

Sometimes it seemed as if Peter grew no better, but remained as headstrong and variable as before. And indeed his deep-seated weakness was not removed until after a very bitter experience, of which you will hear in the next chapter. But we are quite sure that he did in the end learn the lesson which was so difficult for him. We are sure of this, not only from his after life as the leader of the church, but also from a letter which he wrote many years later to his fellow-Christians. In it he warns against the very faults with which he had so long struggled, and praises the virtues he so conspicuously lacked.

He had been something of a busybody, too eager to manage others' affairs, and to speak for them. He tells his readers not to be "meddlers

in other men's matters," or, to give the exact meaning of the Greek word, not to be "an other-people's overseer." He had been proud, and had shrunk from the humble task which his Lord Himself undertook; in his letter he bids every one be "girt with humility," using the very word which describes how a slave ties a towel about his waist for his daily task of washing his master's feet. He had been heedless and rash, blind to Satan's wiles and sudden onsets; therefore he wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary goeth about like a roaring lion." He had been unstable; the burden of the message to his readers is *steadfastness*, and in the closing verses he heaps up different expressions for the same thought, "The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." These words are like the repeated strokes of a hammer to make the nail unmovable.

The lesson was learned at last. And we too can learn it. The same Teacher, most patient and most determined, is ready to train us if we will but love, listen, trust, and be humble.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PETER IN HIS DARK HOUR.

Two of His Apostles were a very heavy burden on Jesus' heart on the last evening of His life: Judas, who was about to betray Him, and Peter, who was about to deny Him. He made one last effort to save Judas and to set Peter on his guard by saying to the Apostles, while they sat at meat with Him, "Verily I say unto you that one of you will betray me." No words could have been more solemn and searching. But Judas went out into the darkness to complete his treachery, and Peter remained just as self-confident and heedless as before.

Once more Jesus sought to startle the latter into watchfulness by saying: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you that he might

sift you as wheat, but I made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish the brethren." But it was without effect. Peter was full of other thoughts; he had a sword, and had made up his mind to use it.

When they had left the upper room and were on their way to the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to the eleven, "All ye shall be offended in me this night, for it is written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.'" Most of them shrank together in silence. They were indeed a crowd of frightened sheep. But Peter was as bold and unforeseeing as ever. "If all shall be offended in thee," he cried, "I shall never be offended." Then said Jesus plainly, "Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." But he would not believe that he could be so dastardly, and replied, "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

All the other Apostles echoed his saying, and made the same promise. They sought to strengthen the flickering flame of their courage

at his fire, which seemed to blaze so brightly. Alas, it burnt too briskly to last long. His were vain words. It must have wearied and saddened the Lord to hear them.

One final warning was granted to Peter. When they had reached the garden, Jesus, sore oppressed in spirit, bade him, together with James and John, keep watch for a little while. But when the Master came back from His first prayer, the struggle still heavy upon Him, there lay the three asleep, heedless alike of spiritual and earthly enemies. Jesus roused them, and warned Peter in especial, flashing as it were, a lantern in his sleep-filled eyes, when He said, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." But Peter slept again; the eyes of his soul were heavy too.

When the band of soldiers entered the garden, in a sudden fit of anger he drew his sword and struck a wild blow at one of the high priest's men, Malchus by name. It was an ill-aimed stroke, for it only grazed the man's head and cut off his ear. And it was sheer madness. Had swords been drawn, every Apostle might have been cut down. Besides, he should

have known that the Master, being the very Son of God, would not use earthly weapons. Jesus swiftly healed the wounded man and rebuked the Apostle for his folly, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father and he shall send me more than twelve legions of angels?" That was the last effort of Peter's courage. He had meant to stand firm, he could nerve himself to fight; but he had not learned the nobler courage which neither resists nor flees. Forbidden to use a weapon, he felt himself at the mercy of the enemy. Panic seized him, and like the others he forsook Jesus and fled.

That was shameful failure for one who had promised so much. But there was worse to follow. Both John and Peter soon stopped in their flight, and turned to see what had befallen Jesus. They traced Him to the high priest's house, and John, who had some acquaintance with the high priest, was able to gain admittance both for himself and for Peter, whom he saw lingering in the shadows near the gate.

The gate opened into an archway which led

directly into the courtyard, round which the house was built. Probably a corridor, raised a little, and open to the courtyard, ran round it, giving access to the different rooms. Though it was spring time, the night air on the hills amid which Jerusalem stands was cold, and a fire was burning in the centre of the open space, around which the servants of the high priest were gathered, telling the maids the story of the night's exploit.

As Peter entered, the woman who kept the door gave one keen glance at him and said, "Art thou also one of this man's disciples?" The moment of the predicted temptation had come. Peter was weak and unprepared, shaken in nerve and uncertain in resolve. In an instant the lie was told. He answered "I am not," and passed on to take a place by the fire, standing and warming himself like the others. He was challenged again, and again denied that he knew anything of the Nazarene.

As he lingered and talked, the watchers round the fire viewed him with growing suspicion. When about an hour had passed, one of the high priest's servants, who was a kinsman of

Malchus, and therefore had cause to remember Peter as well as Jesus, said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" And others, who had noticed Peter's northern accent, struck in, "Of a truth this man was also with him, for he is a Galilean." Then he denied a third time, and added oaths and curses, from which his lips had been so long kept pure, for at all hazards he was bent on proving that he had no connection with Jesus.

At this very moment the prisoner was led, along the corridor or across the courtyard, from the apartment of the high priest on one side of the house to the chamber on the other side, where the council had been hastily assembled. Peter's face was distinct in the firelight, and his vehement words and oaths rang out sharply on the night air. The Lord, bound and guarded, could say no word, but as He passed for a moment out of the shadow, He cast one look upon His Apostle. That look, so full of reproach and pity and love, broke the evil spell and recalled Peter to himself. Just then, a cock crew for the second time, and the words he had scorned to believe a few hours before, rushed back to his mind. Care-

ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN

From the picture by DÜRER, in the Munich Gallery.
Painted 1526.



less of what others thought, he broke into weeping, and, groping his way like a blind man, made for the gate.

As in a lightning flash, he saw at one glance the greatness of his sin. He had denied his Master, his beloved Master, and that, too, after boasting that he at least would be found faithful, whoever failed. The last words his Lord had heard from his lips were this denial and its accompanying curse.

We do not know how Peter spent the day of the crucifixion and the Sabbath following. Heartbroken, he hid himself away, ashamed to look his comrades in the face.

But one at least did not forsake or shun him. John must have seen his sudden departure from the high priest's house, for he succeeded in finding and in comforting him, so that when Mary Magdalene flew to tell the Apostles that the tomb was empty, it was Peter as well as John who rushed to see if her words were true. The worst of Peter's agony ended on that Resurrection Day, for the risen Lord sought him out, and appeared to him alone. We know not what Peter said, or whether he only lay at the feet of his Master,

speechless with shame and grief. But of this we are sure: Jesus comforted and cheered him, gave the seal of forgiveness, and welcomed him as a friend once more, though He did not as yet restore him to his old place as an Apostle.

From that day Peter was cleansed of his old boastfulness and rashness. Though his sin was forgiven, he could not forget his fall. Henceforth he stood ever on guard. He was soon to show how deeply he was changed.

After Jesus had shown Himself to the Apostles in Jerusalem, He commanded them to meet Him in Galilee. The interval of waiting was hard to bear. Each hour they expected to see their risen Lord, but night after night and week after week passed over them without the fulfilment of their hope. Jesus acted thus intentionally. He wished to teach them to believe in Him however long unseen, and to obey His call however suddenly it might come.

Peter grew even more restless than the others, and one evening, as he sat among a little group made up of four Apostles and of two who were only disciples, he started up and said, "I go a-fishing." They had been sitting by the water's edge,

watching boat after boat spread its brown sails, and vanish, mothlike, in the twilight. Peter's companions were in the mood for such a proposal and gladly replied, "We also go with thee." A boat and nets were to hand, for John and James were of the party, and their father Zebedee still possessed fishing craft.

In a trice, the boat was launched and flying before the wind to the fishing grounds, and as Peter took the tiller and they heard the wash of the waves under the gunwale, their spirits rose, and the languor and depression which had possessed them fell away. One almost fears that the old calling seemed for the hour more attractive than the new, however sublime and glorious the latter was. The catching of fish was much easier than the catching of men. They were very weary of suspense and of inaction.

But as the night wore on their elation died away. Not a single fish was taken in their net. All their skill and all their wiles were of no avail. The dawn found them near the shore, pallid and weary. Though so early, it was not deserted. Behold, a fire sent a thin blue smoke into the chilly air, and beside it stood a man, half

obscured by the morning mist, but evidently on watch for the boat. He called in a friendly voice, "Children, have ye aught to eat?" Moodily they answered "No." The same voice cried, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find." They obeyed, and as soon as they began to haul they knew that they had enclosed a multitude of fish.

John at once divined who stood upon the shore and whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter, impetuous as ever, stayed but to cast his garment about him, and leapt into the shallow water to hasten to Jesus' feet. His love had been redoubled since his pardon and the healing of his bitter wound of shame.

When all had come to land Jesus bade them count the fish. Peter hastened to do it. There were one hundred and fifty and three, all of great size, and yet the net was not broken. None of them were needed for the morning meal. Already fish lay broiling on the coals, and bread had been provided. Does it seem strange to you that our risen Saviour should have troubled to make these preparations? He still cares for our bodies as well as for our souls. Now, as then, He is con-

cerned that we should be satisfied and made glad with food.

Little was said during that meal. The Apostles were full of questions they dared not ask, and Jesus wished His servants to ponder this new object-lesson. Only when He gave the command could their work be successful. Through failure of patience they had returned to their old trade without His bidding, and their labour was fruitless. So soon as He commanded they gained in one minute more than a whole week's work would ordinarily procure.

Yet the Lord had not appeared simply to rebuke their impatience. He had come to give back to Peter his place as an Apostle. But first he must be tested. As he had denied his Master thrice before men, so he must confess Him thrice openly. Jesus did not address him as Peter, which was his apostolic name, but called him, as of old, Simon. This was the question He asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter had declared that he would be steadfast even if all the others fled, and Jesus wished to see if the old boastful spirit was there.

The answer was very humble, “Lord, thou knowest that I care for thee.” He did not claim that his love for Jesus was greater than that of the rest; indeed, he did not use at all the nobler word “love” to describe his affection; he chose a humbler word, “to care for.” Then said Jesus, “Feed my lambs.” The easier work, the quieter work of caring for the young of the Saviour’s flock, was given back to Peter.

Jesus asked again, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” There was no question of comparison this time, just the bare enquiry. Still Peter would not call his love by the higher name, but answered as before, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I care for thee.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” Not only the young of the flock but also older Christians are committed to his care, but not wholly. He is only commanded to tend, not to feed.

Once more Jesus tried Peter, and this time He used His Apostle’s own humble word, saying, “Simon, son of Jonas, *carest* thou for me?” Peter was grieved that his Master should doubt even this, but he knew that he deserved no better treatment. With a voice of wist-

ful sorrow he answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I care for thee." Then Jesus was wholly satisfied. Rejoicing in this new found humility, He gave Peter back his old place as under-shepherd, saying, "*Feed my sheep.*" His open sin, followed by open repentance, was now cancelled by this public restoration. A solemn joy filled his soul.

But this was not Jesus' last word. He looked down the future and spoke of the time coming when Peter should die by the hands of violence. Jesus dared now to tell His Apostle of his end, for He saw in him true courage dwelling alongside new humility. "Verily verily I say unto you," He went on, "when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." It was a picture of a prisoner being led to crucifixion which Jesus painted. He trusted Peter wholly now, for He told him the worst, and then said, "Follow me."

Peter followed Jesus at that moment, and followed Him also in his heart. Now he would

walk in the footsteps of the Saviour wherever they led, to whatever cross or shame.

And yet it was still the old Peter, for seeing John also following Jesus he asked, "Lord, and this man, what of him?" There was just a gleam there of the busybody, full of curiosity and quick with the tongue. Jesus answered promptly, and there was an edge on His words, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." It was the last rebuke from Jesus' lips. Resolutely Peter turned his eyes from others' affairs and fixed them on his Lord's example and on his own life. From this time, with scarcely a stumble, he pressed forward on the upward way. His message to us from the heavenly places is never to despair, however deep-seated our fault, however far our fall. There is pardon for the worst of sinners, if only he will repent. The Lord is able to save unto the uttermost.

CHAPTER XIX.

PETER THE FOREMOST APOSTLE.

BEFORE Jesus ascended into heaven, Peter had taken three decisive steps towards becoming all that an Apostle of the Lord should be. First, he gave up his old swearing, careless ways, and joined John the Baptist in his warfare against whatever was evil in the daily life of the Jews. Second, he gave himself up to the Lord Jesus, and forsaking all at His command, was taught that to trust and obey his Master was to please God perfectly. Third, having denied his Lord and repented bitterly, he learnt true humility and real self-distrust. But now a change as great as any of these awaited him and his fellow-Apostles. They were to receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God had always been in the

world as the Spirit of life—the life of the flowers and of animals and of men. He had ever been in men's hearts as the Spirit of goodness, giving them good thoughts and helping them to fight against evil desires. But people did not know Him and could not recognise His helpfulness, until the Saviour came. Then they were taught that the Spirit of God was also the Spirit of Jesus, and that He loves and cherishes and seeks to save just as Jesus did. After our Saviour had died to bring us forgiveness and to declare perfectly the love of our Heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit could be fully given, for the message He had to make known to our hearts had then been completed, and the purpose of God laid bare.

The last night of Jesus' life He spoke a great deal of the Spirit under a beautiful new name, the Comforter or the Champion. He even told them that it was better for them to lose Himself, in order that they might receive the Comforter. While Jesus had been Friend and Master and Saviour, He could not be the Indweller, for He was walking by their side and talking with them face to face, but He promised that He would come with the Holy Spirit, who would enter their

hearts and sit at the fountain of their wills, and give them new life within. Thus they were prepared to believe that the Comforter dwelling in the innermost would be all that the Lord Jesus had been when He lived with them.

On the day in which our Lord ascended, He laid His last commands upon His Apostles, directing them to abide in Jerusalem until the Spirit should come upon them. They were not now in sore distress of soul, but keenly alive to their unfitness for the great work before them, therefore He did not speak of the Comforter, but gave them the promise of "Power from on high." The Spirit was to come as the Energy for service, just what the little band felt they most needed if they were to be witnesses according to their Lord's word "in Jerusalem, in Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

After they had beheld their Master ascend with outstretched hands of blessing, to be hidden by a cloud from their longing eyes, they did not scatter to their homes, but kept together in Jerusalem. Day by day, in the familiar upper room, still at their disposal, they met to remember

their blessed and ascended Lord, and to await the fulfilment of His promise. Ten days passed by and it was Pentecost.

Pentecost, or the Fiftieth, was the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Harvest, and came exactly fifty days after Passover. Two loaves made of the new wheat were offered in the Temple, and it was a time of rejoicing as the people saw the fruit of their seed-sowing, and the reward of their labour in the field. There was not such a multitude of visitors in Jerusalem as at the Passover, but a great many gathered from far off lands to this feast also.

The friends of Jesus met early that day, just three hours after sunrise. There were one hundred and twenty in all, made up of the Apostles, the mother and brothers of Jesus, and other believers. They had not been long assembled when, without a moment's warning, a sound fell upon the roof as of a mighty rushing wind, and immediately they saw what appeared to be tongues of flame flickering in the air above the head of each, men and women alike. Immediately the whole assembly began to speak tumultuous praise to God, in voices of strange

and awful harmony. Every one of them was so filled with joy and strength and courage that they shouted aloud, making the walls ring again and again with the tempest of sound.

It was the hour in the morning when many worshippers went up to the Temple service. The passers in the street heard the strange noise as of a sudden whirlwind in the centre of Jerusalem, and hastening to ascertain the cause, the voices so high, piercing and commanding in their ecstasy of praise, reached their ears. Without standing on ceremony, they hurried up the outer stair and pushed open the doors of the room, and then stood amazed at what they saw and heard.

Every disciple, with looks of exaltation, spoke as he was moved. At first, the bystanders could distinguish nothing in the medley of sounds, and then one by one the foreigners began to detect what appeared to them to be the words of their own language or dialect, spoken in some country hundreds of miles away, and scarcely known in Jerusalem. The voices certainly conveyed to them meaning, and they were able to understand the strains of praise which poured

from the whole company, as, with eyes turned heavenward, they exalted God's goodness.

After the first moments of perplexity, some began to scoff, and hint that the whole gathering had been joining too freely in the festivities of Pentecost, and were in fact filled with new wine. Then Peter arose, and standing among his fellow-Apostles at the doorway of the room, he lifted up his voice, and quickly compelled silence on every hand. Anyone who had known him two months before, or even the day before, could see that he was greatly changed. Strength and calmness shone in his eyes, dignity and courage sat on his brow. Clad still in his rough fisher dress, he looked a prince among men. The most indifferent passer-by was held attentive.

Then Peter told them that he and his companions were not drunken, for it was only nine in the morning, but that they were filled with the joy and strength of the Holy Spirit, promised centuries before by the prophet Joel. He quoted the words beginning, "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh." By this time all the people were riveted, and a crowd extending far

down the street was listening spell-bound to his impassioned voice. The moment for rebuke had come.

“Ye men of Israel,” he cried, “hear these words.” Then he told them of Jesus, of His perfect life, of His wonderful miracles, and of His death, at their demand, by the hands of lawless men. Swiftly he passed to speak of the resurrection of our Lord, and quoted from the Psalms to remind them that thus prophecy had been fulfilled. Pointing to his comrades, he summed up all he had to say in these words:—“This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.”

The faces of the listeners blanched as this last sentence rang out like a word of doom. “Whom we crucified,” they murmured to themselves. Their consciences smote them, as many remembered the kind and holy face of Him whom

they had cursed on the way to Golgotha, whose condemnation they had demanded, shouting “the cross, the cross.” In their sudden misgiving they were as if stabbed to the heart, and cried out to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do ?”

Peter answered, his voice now full of love and hope : “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” To trust in the Saviour and to bind themselves to Him by the definite act of baptism—that was the path of peace and the secret of power. It was a great deal to expect from Jews who had hounded this same Jesus through their streets but seven weeks before. Nevertheless their consciences had been at work, the power of Jesus was plainly before their eyes, and Peter did not cease to urge and warn them until three thousand yielded to his exhortations, and confessing their sins, joined the little company of believers.

Can this be Peter, the boastful and the unstable ; he who, frightened by a woman, lied and denied his Lord ; the man whom Jesus called

"Satan," only a few months before, because he tried to turn the Master back from the Cross? Can this brave, calm champion, fearless before a multitude whom he charges with murder, be Peter? It is the same, but his fault has taught him humility, the Lord's resurrection has fired him with courage, and the Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit has filled him with divine energy.

For some time the priests and Pharisees who had slain Jesus, did not interfere at all with the new preacher and his converts. To the infant church it was a time of sunshine. A multitude had become believers, all were full of joy, and the people of Jerusalem, awe-stricken and startled, left them entirely undisturbed. But this heaven on earth could only last a little while. Soon the priests stretched out their hands to interfere, and the long, sore struggle began.

One day Peter and John were going up to the Temple in the afternoon, at the usual hour of evening sacrifice. They entered from the outer court by the gate which was called Beautiful, wrought in solid brass, plated with gold and silver, and so massive that twenty men were needed to move it. In this gateway a lame

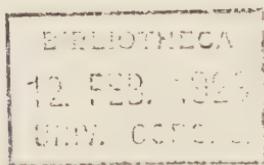
beggar was sitting, as had been his custom for many years. He had often seen Jesus pass, but he had been so anxious for the half-pence of the well-to-do, that he had never sought the greatest of gifts from the Supreme Giver. But his mind had been stirred lately, and he had heard much of Peter and the ingathering of three thousand people.

Now, as he saw this very Peter in company with John, actually passing him, he begged an alms. Perhaps it was not so much money he wanted this time, but rather an opportunity to speak. Peter gave him one long, searching glance, and seeing that there was the beginning of faith within him, he said, "Look on us." The lame man looked up from the pavement expectantly. Then said Peter, full of the new power, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And at that word he seized the man by his hand and lifted him up. The beggar believed the word of the Apostle and made an answering effort. Leaping to his feet, he stood and began to walk. He was indeed perfectly healed. The ascended Lord was as mighty to

ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN HEALING THE
LAME MAN

From the cartoon by RAPHAEL (1513-1574), in the
Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.





heal through His Apostles as he had been by His own hand when on earth.

The beggar could not contain his joy. Keeping fast hold of the hands of Peter and John, he leaped and leaped again, delighting in the new strength of his limbs, and praising God without ceasing. All the people knew the man well by sight; many of them had spared him a coin at times, and when they saw him they gathered together by hundreds to hear what had happened. Peter drew them under the great roof of Solomon's porch, as it was called, a vast building, larger than Westminster Abbey, with open columns as in a cloister. Here, protected from the rays of the sun, he preached his second sermon.

It was very similar to the first. He explained that the beggar was really healed by Jesus, the same Jesus they had crucified, when they preferred a murderer to Him, the spotless One. But He had been raised from the dead, for He was the only Son of God, and the Messiah long expected. Their sin was indeed great, but seeing that they had done it partly in ignorance, there was pardon for them if they would repent and believe in this

risen Lord. For God had sent Him first unto Jerusalem to turn away every one of them from their iniquities.

The sermon was never finished. The priests and scribes came suddenly upon them and hurried them to prison. They could not endure to hear any one praise Jesus ; and the Sadducees, who taught that there was no resurrection, were in particular offended, because these men proclaimed that He had risen from the dead.

Here was a new temptation for Peter. He had lied like a coward before the high priest's servants ; how would he meet the high priest himself and all the councillors of the Sanhedrin ? He was quite fearless, for he did not depend now on his own poor courage and strength. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he stood up before all the dignitaries of Jerusalem, and told them to their faces that this Jesus whom they crucified had been raised from the dead, and that by His power the lame man had been made whole.

The priests and rulers were staggered at the boldness of Peter and John, knowing them to be uncultivated men. There was only one fact to be learnt about them—they had been with Jesus.

The hateful name was ever in the councillors ears. They consulted together, and then thinking to browbeat these ignorant Galileans, they forbade them to speak at all or to teach in the name of their Master.

But Peter did not quail. He saw much more than the supreme council, as he stood there. With the eye of faith, he saw his Lord, surrounded by the legions of the angels. Quite calmly he answered, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard.” The councillors blustered a little more and threatened again, but they dared not punish the Apostles, for the lame man was over forty years old, and all Jerusalem was ringing with the news of the cure. So Peter and John went back to their friends, rejoicing that they were allowed to suffer even a little for Jesus’ sake.

The Apostles became popular for a time, for they were able to do many deeds of healing in the all-powerful Name, but the chief priests watched them with ceaseless and vigilant hatred.

Upon the first opportunity they laid hold of

all the Apostles and kept them as prisoners. But the Lord sent one of His mighty messengers, at whose touch the prison doors flew open. The angel brought them forth and said, "Go ye and stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life." Gladly they obeyed, and next morning, when the council met to consider the charge against them, the officers came saying that the prison was empty. Filled with amazement, the chief priest and his supporters knew not what to think. The prisoners seemed to have vanished into the thin air. Just then a messenger came hurrying to say that the offenders were back in their old place in Solomon's porch, teaching as if nothing had happened.

Forthwith Peter and John and their fellow Apostles were brought before the council, and the high priest demanded what they meant by their disobedience, and by this accusation that he and his fellow-councillors were guilty of the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter, as undaunted as before, replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree." These words cut the council to the heart. This

man dared to stand before them and charge them—the Sanhedrin—with murder! Murder was in their hearts now, and they longed to slay him. But one of the councillors turned them from their purpose; and having beaten the Apostles and threatened them afresh should they speak of Jesus, the council let them go. They went forth rejoicing, as if they had received great gifts and honours. The stripes upon their backs were an offering for their Lord.

So Peter led on his fellows, and spread the good news far and wide among the people of Jerusalem. Ever mindful of his Lord's command he fed the sheep of the flock and taught the believers the life of faith and love and service. Many were his dangers, but out of them all he was delivered until there was a new king in Jerusalem called Herod Agrippa. He was anxious to please the Jews; and, as many of them had begun to hate the followers of Jesus, he made the Apostle James a prisoner, and without the pretence of a trial beheaded him.

Next he laid hold of Peter and placed him in his inmost dungeon, intending to bring him forth and execute him publicly. But there

was a delay of some days, for it was the Passover time, and he wished the Feast to be over before the execution. The church was greatly distressed at Peter's danger, and many earnest people met together to pray for his release.

The last night of respite came. Peter lay in his cell, chained to two soldiers. Guards watched without the door. Rescue seemed hopeless. All was dark. How did Peter spend that last night? He lay in so sound a sleep that he was not easily roused. He did not fear death. Death was but a step nearer to his Lord.

Suddenly a light shined in the prison, and an angel smote Peter on the side and bade him "Arise." He obeyed, and the chains fell from him as he rose, but though they rang on the stones, his guards still slept. The angel did not hurry, but bade him put on his clothing and bind on his sandals and follow. They passed the first guard, asleep; then the second guard, asleep also; and as they reached the iron gate at the last barrier of the prison, it flew open without a touch. Peter stood free. The night air was on his cheek, the stars shone above him. The

ST. PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON

A facsimile in miniature of the fresco by RAPHAEL
(1483-1520), in the Vatican, Rome.



angel led him up one street and then vanished. It had seemed but a happy dream, from which he would awake to find himself back in the dungeon. Now he knew it was reality, and that the Lord had sent a heavenly messenger to his rescue. But where was he to go?

He thought a moment, and then turned his steps to the house of Mary the mother of Mark, wherein, we think, was the much used, much loved upper room. Here the Christians had gathered to pray for Peter. One after another was beseeching God to help him, to comfort him, and to release him. A loud knock at the outer door resounded through the midnight stillness. A housemaid, Rhoda by name, hurried to the gate and asked who was there, fearing to unlock it, lest enemies were at hand. As soon as she heard Peter's voice, she ran in and told the good news. But the people cried "Thou art mad." They were praying for Peter, but they could not believe that their prayers were answered even as they uttered them. The maid declared she was certain, and then they said in awe-struck voice, "It is his angel."

But Peter continued knocking. Every passing

moment meant possible danger for him. When at last the door was opened, they were filled with astonishment and fell on him with a hundred questions. But he beckoned for silence, and told them how wonderfully the Lord had set him free. Then he went forth and hid himself, until called to bear the brunt of a fresh attack.

And there are other stories which show us how greatly Peter was changed, and how fearless and steadfast he had become.¹ But you have heard enough to recognise that the Holy Spirit of God is the great transformer and giver of life. He does not come to men now with the sound of wind and the tongue of flame, but He does still come to all who seek Him. He can cleanse us from as dark faults and grievous weaknesses as those of Peter; and though we are not called to be Apostles, yet by His grace in our hearts we too can be kept faithful in the path of duty, and be made brave to bear our share of the world's pain.

CHAPTER XX.

PETER THE MIRACLE-WORKER.

BEFORE persecution began, the young church in Jerusalem was very full of joy for a little while. It was like a garden in a bright spring-time, when there is not a single faded leaf. The poor did not envy the rich who sold their lands that all might have abundance, and the rich grudged nothing to the poor, for the spirit of brotherhood made them all one great family. It was a second Paradise. But alas, as the Evil One crept into the garden of Eden, so he crept into this garden of Heavenly life, and lured a husband and wife from the path of goodness. It was corruption within, not persecution from without, which first threatened the church.

Ananias and Sapphira were well-to-do people, who had confessed their faith in the Lord and

had been baptized. When they saw other rich believers selling their houses and lands, and gaining honour in the church by presenting the money, they felt drawn to follow this example, but were not really filled with the love of Christ's poor ones, and easily decided to give only part of the price they had received. This would not necessarily have been wrong had they done it openly and without deceit, but they arranged together to act a lie, that by pretending to give the whole, they might be honoured as the most charitable of people.

The Apostles were sitting in the assembly of the church, with many of the believers present, when Ananias brought the money and laid it solemnly before them as a gift consecrated to the Lord. Peter looked upon him, and knowing by the Holy Spirit that the man had yielded to the double sin of covetousness and hypocrisy, he said : "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land ? Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power ? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy

mind? Thou has not lied unto men but unto God."

These words filled all hearers with dismay. Who, then, could be trusted if those who gave gifts directly to the Lord could be pretenders? No one spoke a word, and the silence was first broken by the thud of some one falling to the ground. It was Ananias, and when they lifted him up he was dead. Shame and fear and remorse had attacked him like a sudden deadly sickness, and his heart ceased to beat. Stricken from heaven, not by Peter's word, he lay a confused heap alongside the money which had told the fatal lie. The young men in the church arose, wrapped up the dead man's body, and covering his terror-stricken face, carried him forth to bury him.

Three hours later his wife came in, perhaps anxious because Ananias had not returned, and knowing nothing of what had happened, for no one had been able to find her to break the dreadful news. The service was over, but Peter was still in the building where the church met. He asked her at once, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?" She did not change

countenance in the least, but answered "Yea, for so much." Then Peter, in one terrible sentence, pronounced her doom, saying: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out." At that word she fell to the ground, and in one sigh gave up the ghost.

When these things were told to the church everyone trembled. They felt that the eye of their Lord was upon them, and that, while full of love, He was also the perfectly Holy One. Each searched his heart to know if the love of gain, or the vain desire for praise, or the purpose of a lie lurked there. No one for a moment thought of charging God with unkindness or harshness. Did they not know that the sins of Judas the betrayer were just the two sins of Ananias and Sapphira? It was as if the husband and wife had purposed to crucify the Lord afresh.

Another time, Peter had to speak very sternly to a man who in appearance was a believer in the Lord Jesus. It was in a city in Samaria, where

one called Philip—not the Apostle, but another officer of the church—had been preaching, and had won many people to the truth.

Before Philip went there, a magician called Simon, who knew some of the secrets of nature, had gained great influence over the inhabitants by the wonders he had worked. He had declared himself to be a prophet of God, and they, in their ignorance, had thought he was really the Messiah, and that God dwelt in him. But they welcomed the good tidings of salvation which Philip preached. The magician had only amazed and frightened them. Philip's words showed them the way of joy and cleansing.

Simon, disgusted to find that the crowds which used to gather round him now flocked to Philip, came to hear him too, and saw for himself that Philip, by the power of the Spirit of God, was able through the name of Jesus to heal the sick and to give sight to the blind. Such miracles were far beyond the wonders Simon attempted. He was convinced that the Jesus of whom Philip ever spoke must be the very Power of God, the true Messiah, so he too was baptized.

When the Apostles heard of this great work

in Samaria, they requested Peter and John to go down and encourage and assist Philip. When they came, they found that these new believers had not yet received the special gift of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the Apostles besought God to grant this added grace, and laid their hands upon all who had believed. Thereupon, the same signs of joy and vigour seen in Jerusalem were repeated, so that every onlooker could see the transformation and quickening.

The late magician, who had followed every movement of the Apostles with the keenest interest, did not share in this new blessing, for, though it had not been discerned, the man was not really sincere. And when he saw that the Apostles had the power to confer this extraordinary gift of heavenly energy and joy, he came to them and begged to be allowed to share their secret. He thought that they were just magicians like himself, only more powerful, and that they plied their art, as he had done, for gain. Accordingly, he offered them money, any sum they liked to ask, if they would only tell him how this miracle could be wrought.

Peter was grieved beyond measure to find

that any man, aboye all one who had been baptized, thought that God's favour and the power of His Spirit could be bought and sold. "Thy silver perish with thee," he cried, "because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God." But Peter, still mindful of his own fall, added words of pity and of hope to this fearful curse, and went on to say, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

Simon was filled with terror as he heard the curse, but he thought nothing of his sin. He had so long pretended to be a divine messenger, and sought to make money out of this pretence, that his conscience was quite dead. He only felt that he had made a huge blunder and stood in serious danger, and in an abject tone entreated Peter, "Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me." Love of power and place and money,—vanity and ambition and covetousness,—the same temptations which had ruined Judas and had corrupted Ananias and Sapphira, had raised their

ugly serpent heads again. Peter must have hated them with a deadly hatred. We must hate them too.

But when Peter went up and down Palestine among the “saints,”—that is, the consecrated ones, as the early believers called themselves,—he often saw only what made him glad, and the Lord gave him amazing power to help the suffering and sorrowful.

Once, coming down to Lydda, a little city, twenty miles from Jerusalem, where begin the great wheatfields which stretch to the sea, he found a disciple called Æneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, unable to lift hand or foot. When Peter saw him and knew that he was a believer in the Lord, he remembered how Jesus had healed the paralysed man in Capernaum, and felt persuaded that it was his Master’s will to give back health to this man also. Imitating his Master closely, he said, “Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed.” Immediately the man arose, for the limbs, useless so long, were strong again.

All the people in the city and in the plain

around heard of this wonderful recovery. They had already been much interested in the story of Jesus, and of His death and resurrection. This miracle was like a spark on dry wood. The fire of faith and love spread swiftly from one to another, until whole households and whole streets of people became disciples.

Just ten miles off, on a low spur of rock, lay the seaport of Joppa, its white houses visible across the waving wheat. The news of Peter's presence soon spread thither, and one day two messengers arrived from the disciples with an urgent plea, "Delay not to come on unto us."

One of their number, known to them all and much loved, was dead. This was Tabitha, a name meaning 'gazelle,' one of the loveliest animals in the East. It was only appropriate to those marked by beauty and gentleness, but it had suited her so well that when she received a Greek name, people called her Dorcas, which is just an exact translation of her old name, and also means 'gazelle.' She was not only graceful in form and manner, but she had a beautiful soul. Being a woman, she could not preach for her Saviour, but she could work for Him, and

she was not content merely to give her money, but she gave her time and strength as well, buying stuffs and making garments for the poor.

It was a mournful sight that awaited Peter. He was led into an upper room, where lay the body of Dorcas, ready for burial, while round about the bed gathered the poor widows for whom she had laboured, and who showed him the garments they were wearing, the fruit of her loving toil. As he stood by the bedside and understood that this woman had found for herself a new path of service whereby to honour God, the thought entered his mind that it might be his Lord's will to accomplish from heaven what He had thrice done on earth, even to restore the dead to life. He put everyone out of the room, and when alone, knelt down and prayed.

While on his knees, he received the assurance that it was the will of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life to give back life to this doer of many kindnesses, and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." She immediately opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, sat up. He gave her his hand and, raising her up, presented her to all who were mourning in the house. Swiftly

the news flew from door to door. When Dorcas was again seen, moving about on her errands of mercy, men and women would point her out to strangers, saying, "She was dead, and Peter, a disciple of Jesus, restored her to life."

So much interest was thus aroused in the Christ through whose power the miracle was wrought, that Peter lingered in Joppa many days, preaching the good news, and rejoicing in the ever increasing number of believers.

Thus God once more unlocked the great gates of death, not only giving us another token that the blessed dead who sleep in Jesus are in fulness of life to-day, but also sealing with His approval the tender and skilful labour of His handmaiden. She could not minister as Salome and Mary Magdalene did to the Lord's personal needs, but in ministering to His poor she had ministered to Himself, for had not His own lips declared, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me?"

CHAPTER XXI.

PETER THE HELPER OF THE GENTILES.

PETER had grown very humble, very brave, very steadfast through the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit, but there was still one thing lacking. He was just as narrow-minded as his fellow-believers. They all thought that Judaism was as necessary as Christianity. Jesus had prophesied that all men would come unto Him, and He had commanded His Apostles to go not only unto Judaea and Samaria, but also unto the uttermost parts of the earth; yet it never entered their minds that other nations, the Gentiles as they called them, could be saved without first becoming Jews. To them, Christianity was like the inner court of some temple, only to be reached through an outer court of Judaism.

And it was not incredible to them that multitudes from every nation would embrace Judaism in order to become Christians. They knew that a vast number of thoughtful Greeks and Romans were thoroughly dissatisfied with their own idolatrous religions, and that a good many had become Jews, submitting to every rule and rite of their adopted religion, however distasteful some of these might be.

Thus, when Peter left Jerusalem on a mission tour through the south and west of Palestine, he had no thought of seeking to teach any except Jews concerning the Saviour. Indeed, he would have shrunk from staying under the roof of a Gentile, however good he might be; for, as you know, the Jews are forbidden certain kinds of meat, such as swine's flesh, and are only allowed to eat what has been killed in a particular way. But God's thoughts are not as men's thoughts, and the Lord's heart was larger than the heart of Peter. He who had died for all was ready to welcome all, not by the narrow gate of Judaism, or by the round-about way of the Temple, but by the door of faith and by the path of penitence. The Lord

taught this to His disciple in the following remarkable way.

In the great new city of Cæsarea, a seaport built by King Herod the Great, there lived a Roman centurion called Cornelius. He was stationed there as an officer in one of the three legions with which the Romans held the Jews of Palestine in unwilling subjection. Convinced of the error of the idolatrous religion in which he had been brought up, he had ceased to worship gods and goddesses, and had come to believe in the true God. Though he had apparently never become a Jew, he had learned a great deal from the Jews, and prayed and fasted and gave alms just as they did.

But he was not wholly satisfied. He had heard of Jesus and of His gospel, and probably of the amazing miracles done by Peter in towns quite near him. Therefore he longed to know whether these new revelations of Jehovah were for him, though a Gentile, and he desired with a great desire to be assured of God's mercy towards himself and his household.

With this purpose in his heart, he remained one day quietly in his own room, fasting and

praying until three in the afternoon. At that hour he was conscious of a mysterious presence, and beheld what was unmistakably a heavenly messenger, who called him by his name, "Cornelius." The centurion was awe-stricken before this unearthly visitant, and in great fear asked, "What is it, Lord?" The answer was full of comfort for him. "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside."

Cornelius, like a true soldier, obeyed orders promptly. No sooner had the angel disappeared than he called one of his soldiers—an orderly, as we would say—who generally did his messages, and two of his slaves, whom he could trust. These he sent off to Joppa to ask Peter to come at once.

Joppa was about thirty miles from Cæsarea, and also a seaport, as it is to this day. The three messengers halted for the night, and pushed on next morning so as to draw near to the city about noontide, pressing on through the midday heat

in their eagerness to do their master's bidding. As they were nearing the place, Peter went up to the house-top to pray, for in the middle of the day that was one of the quietest places. Becoming hungry, he asked his host to prepare food, and meanwhile waited where he was.

The house stood on the very edge of Palestine, and was almost washed by the waves of the Mediterranean. Behind him lay the Holy Land, before him the vast, mysterious sea, very different from the little lake he knew so well, and beyond that sea the great Gentile nations. He thought that the whole world must come to this little land of Palestine if it would come to Christ.

But as he was waiting he fell into a trance. It was not a dream during sleep, but a waking dream. He thought he saw the blue sky opened, and a great linen cloth, held up by invisible hands at the four corners, slowly descend before him, until he could look over its edge. It was filled with all manner of animals, birds, and insects, some of them forbidden to the Jews and some permitted. A voice sounded in his ears ; "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." With his old promptitude, and with the indignation of a strict

Jew, he replied, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." The voice answered, "What God hath cleansed make not thou common."

Thrice the voice commanded him to take what he chose from the innumerable birds and beasts before him. Thrice he refused, and thrice again the solemn voice forbade him to be more strict than God. Then the sheet was slowly withdrawn into the sky, and he came to himself.

While Peter, in much perplexity, considered what the vision could mean, there was a loud knocking at the outer gate. The messengers had entered the city and had found out the house of Simon the tanner. The Spirit of God impressed on Peter's mind that the coming of these three men had to do with him. He hurried down the outer stair from the roof to the gate where they stood, and opening it, said, "Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come?" Then they delivered the centurion's message, and assured Peter that their master was a just and kindly man, fearing God and well spoken of among the Jews who knew him.

It was too late to start that day, so Peter invited the men in and lodged them for the night. Then he busied himself with his preparations, and in particular secured six of the devout Jews of Joppa who also were believers in Jesus to go with him. He could not understand whither the Lord was leading him, but he followed step by step, patiently seeking to learn his Master's will, in spite of his own prejudices.

The larger party travelled more slowly, and it was not until three o'clock on the second day of journeying that they reached Cornelius' quarters in the barracks. As soon as he saw Peter, he fell at his feet as if the visitor were little less than a god. But Peter raised him at once, for he could not bear that the smallest honour should be taken from his Saviour. "Stand up," he said. "I myself also am a man." And as they went in, he talked in the most friendly way, so that the centurion soon lost the impression that a supernatural person was at his side.

On entering the room, Peter found quite a large assembly, for Cornelius in the course of the past months had gathered other like-minded and earnest Gentiles round him, and had invited

them all to meet the messenger of the living God.

Peter began in his frank, abrupt way by telling them that it was an unheard of thing for a Jew to come to stay under a Gentile roof, but that God had just been teaching him not to call any man common or unclean. Then Cornelius told his story more fully, and concluded by saying, "Now, therefore, we are all here present in the sight of God to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord."

Thereupon Peter preached to them with great joy ; but he was so excited that at first he could not express all he meant to say. He began sentences and forgot to finish them, and then began again. However, he made himself understood ; and as he went on he grew calm and told them of the spotless life of Jesus, of His wonderful deeds and death upon the cross, and how God raised Him from the dead. Further, he declared that he himself was sent forth with others as witnesses for the risen Lord, to proclaim Him as the Judge of the living and of the dead, and as the Saviour of all who should believe on Him.

Here his sermon was interrupted, not by

the sudden inrush of armed men as once at Jerusalem, but by all the signs of the special presence of the Holy Spirit appearing upon his hearers. We do not know whether the sound of the storm wind and the tongues of flame were repeated, but the listeners were filled with such joy and hope that they burst into praise of God, and spoke strange words in voices of extraordinary power and sweetness. Peter did not attempt to continue his address, but said to his fellow-believers from Joppa, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ?”

Thus, for the first time believers in the Saviour were welcomed into the church without bearing the mark of the Jew, and without promising to keep the Jewish feasts and days. That was a great day for the world, and a great deed which was done in Cæsarea. No longer would men need to take the long journey round to the little wicket-gate of the Jewish religion, but they might enter straight into the City of Peace by the wide-open doors, above which are written these words, “Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.”

This great change in the thoughts of the church was not completed easily. As soon as Peter had returned to Jerusalem, some of the Christians there who were very strict Jews charged him with being untrue to the faith, because he had sat down at the same table with Gentiles. His reply to this charge was to tell them the whole story from beginning to end. As he spoke, the faces which had been stern and frowning grew kind again. When they heard his last words, “Who was I, that I could withstand God?” they said not another word of blame, but gave praise, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.”

Even yet the vexed question was not finally settled. As more and more Gentiles became believers, it became plain to the stricter Jewish Christians that soon there would be far more Gentiles than Jews in the church. This seemed to them to dishonour the Temple, and the God of the Temple. They therefore exerted themselves to send messengers and preachers throughout the church in order to persuade all Christians to become Jews; sometimes they went so far as

to say it was impossible to be saved unless one submitted wholly to the religion of Israel.

Thus there grew up three parties in the church. Some said, "Everyone must become a Jew to be a true Christian." Others said, "No one need become a Jew in order to be a Christian." And still others, "It is not needful to become a Jew, but a man is a better kind of Christian if he is a Jew also." Those who would not throw the doors of heaven wide open fought hard, and once even persuaded Peter to cease eating with certain Christians who were not Jews. He would not indeed have denied these Gentiles the name of believers, but he did want to force them to become Jews as well.

At last a great council of the church was held at Jerusalem, and James, the Lord's brother, was its president. Some Christians who had once been Pharisees pressed very hard for a decree that no one should be acknowledged as belonging to the church unless he accepted the Jewish rites and ceremonies. Then Peter arose and told his story once again. And after Peter, Paul and Barnabas, of whom you are soon to

hear more, gave their wonderful history of the multitudes of heathen who came straight to the Lord Jesus and were saved by Him, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, without having so much as understood all that the Jewish religion asked. To these statements the Pharisee Christians made no answer.

Then the president stood up and decided that all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, were to be welcomed so long as they observed certain general rules. Thus by Peter's courage and moderation and willingness to be taught, the church was saved from being rent in twain, and the doors of salvation were set wide open for white and black, bond and free, rich and poor alike. Whosoever will may come.

But many people still repeat Peter's mistake. They think that everyone should become an Englishman before becoming a Christian. They will spend much money to preach God's word to the poor and the neglected in England, but they will give nothing to help missionary work abroad. If these had their way, the Chinese, the Hindoos, and the Africans could never become Christians unless they first came

to live in England. But that is not Jesus' way. The Holy Spirit is waiting to teach you, dear child, that the glad message is for all men in every land. You too must help to set the great doors of salvation wide open and to send the good news afar. Grow, like Peter, out of narrow-mindedness, and have the large heart that loves and longs to save all.

CHAPTER XXII.

JUDAS THE BETRAYER.

LONG, long ago the great poet and prophet Isaiah had spoken of the One who should come to redeem Israel as “A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” and truly the sorrows which beset our Lord were many, and beyond our power of understanding. It is true that He also had joys. In healing and comforting and pardoning He rejoiced exceedingly. But we must remember that to His purity every sin He beheld was an offence, which yet, in His love for men, He carried as His own. Then there was the wall of unbelief that men built up between themselves and Him, and which separated Him even from His brothers. There was also the baseness of spirit that caused many of those who had begun to follow, to turn back

when they saw the height of the aim set before them.

But the sorrow that lay deepest was with Him for almost three years, a living presence, often sitting at meat with Him, walking with Him through the day, and by night lying by His side. It was no other than one of His own Apostles. It was Judas.

Yet we can partly understand how he was chosen. When Jesus spent the night in prayer before appointing the Apostles, His mind must have been driven back again and again to the thought of this man, until He knew it to be His Father's will that he should be one of the Twelve.

One of the greatest of painters has pictured Judas as very beautiful, and we imagine that this may have been so. He must have been capable of a certain kind of enthusiasm, and in the beginning he really loved Jesus, though with the love of a self-seeker. Like the others, he gave up all to follow the Master; but while they had their ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven purified until it became purely spiritual, his was ever a kingdom of earthly ambitions, in which he should have a

foremost place. It was for the kingdom of his dreams that he sacrificed everything, believing that at last he would be more than repaid. His will was never subject to the will of Jesus, for his private ends were never forgotten, and he kept steadily looking for the day of his own advancement.

He was of a silent nature, too. If he had only spoken out as Peter did, his Master might have urged him to do battle with his own greed, but he never showed his heart to Jesus. When he spoke he was smooth-tongued, and seemed always to agree. Jesus was never blinded by him, but read him clearly, and again and again spoke words of warning, addressed to all the Apostles, but with an under-meaning for the one.

The first time that our Lord spoke plainly was about a year before His death. The men of Galilee, excited by the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, had sought to make Him king, but He had resisted them, and on the following morning had offended them further by His address in the synagogue. When the people had left Him alone, He turned to His Apostles and asked, "Will ye also go away?" Peter

answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

But rage and thwarted ambition had raised the veil from Judas' face, and out of his eyes there glared a fiend. As Jesus looked upon him He added, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Had there been one remnant of honest purpose in Judas then, he would at once have departed. But he did not. If he was startled by the sudden word, it only warned him to hide his thought more carefully, and to seem to agree as did the others with Peter's declaration. From that moment he remained, as a hypocrite, to get what he could for himself.

Even as things were, he had opportunities to enrich himself. Neither Jesus nor the twelve kept any money for themselves, but put it all into a common fund, and Judas kept the bag. I think he must have been chosen by his comrades for the post because he liked the work and was good at it. Jesus would not have put him in the way of special temptation. In time Judas began to pilfer from what was entrusted to him, and sometimes there were con-

siderable sums in his hands, for all the Apostles were not poor, and occasionally gifts were made to Jesus. As no questions were ever asked, it was easy to be a thief while playing the part of an honest man.

Now, no man can live constantly with a very good person who loves him, and give in return neither sympathy nor loyalty, without coming in time to feel hatred. It is impossible to go on receiving love and playing the hypocrite and remain indifferent.

Thus, in the last year of his life, Judas' love for Jesus changed slowly to distaste and dislike, and at last to a kind of hatred. He felt himself to be an almost ruined man. He had given up his little home in the town of Kerioth and had joined with these Galilæans because of a certain fascination the Master had for him, and because he hoped for a high place in the kingdom of the Messiah. Now he must return to his old companions and his old way of life, and tell them that the bubble had burst, that he had wandered through Palestine for three years, often footsore and often suffering hardship, and in the end had nothing to show for it all. More and more

he became filled with an intolerable irritation when he considered that Jesus had cast aside such an opportunity.

At length Judas began to consider in what way, with gain to himself, he could withdraw from the failing enterprise. An incident at Bethany, barely a week before the death of his Master, finally decided him.

At the feast prepared in the honour of Jesus at the house of Simon the leper, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, poured costly spikenard upon the feet of her Lord, and Judas was filled with an unreasoning anger. He could not endure to think that a perfume of such price should be lavished in such a way. Why was it not sold for the poor and the money given into his keeping, when he might have profited, as he had done so often before? He began to complain loudly, and succeeded in rousing some of the others, who really cared for the poor, to murmur also. But Jesus paid no heed to these remonstrances. Rather He rebuked Judas, and had only the highest praise for Mary.

In that moment the false Apostle decided to act. The present state of things should

last but little longer. He would betray his Master to the priests, who were eager for an opportunity to have Him put out of their way.

So the miserable man yielded to the suggestion of the Devil and went his way privately to the high priest and his confederates. With what relief they heard his proposal. They had feared riots, should they take Jesus in some public place ; at Bethany, where He went night by night, He might escape them ; and there must be no unsuccessful attempt. Yet, though they had been almost at their wits' end, they drove a hard bargain with Judas ; the price was only thirty pieces of silver, the cost of a slave. For such a paltry sum, paid at once, he undertook to betray his Master in some quiet spot.

But there was still a chance that Judas might be softened, brought to repentance, and saved. Jesus used that chance to the full on the last evening of His life. When He washed the Apostles' feet, He washed the feet of Judas too. His kind hands touched the betrayer in gentle, friendly service. But Judas only clutched more closely the purse with the thirty pieces hidden in his robe.

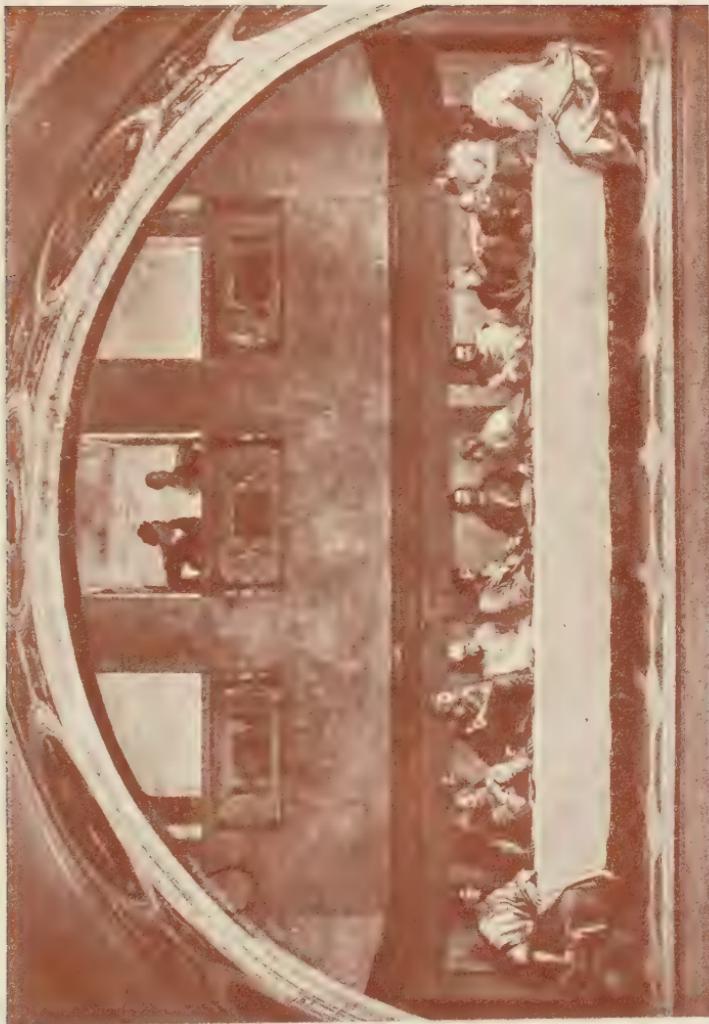
Later in the evening, Jesus said to the Apostles, "One of you shall betray me." He wished Judas to know that He was aware of his treachery. Still Judas played the hypocrite, and asked with laboured pretence, after the manner of the other disciples, "Is it I?" Jesus gave him the spearpoint of truth when He replied, "Thou hast said truly." No one else heard the words. They were for Judas' ear alone. But even then he did not draw back, and Jesus seeing that all effort was hopeless bade him go. "That thou doest, do quickly," He said, and Judas rose and hurried forth into the night.

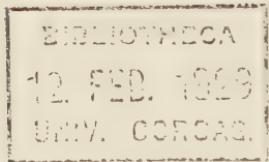
Later in the evening, when Jesus was not found in the guest chamber, Judas led his band to the Garden of Gethsemane, where, beneath the shelter of the olives, Jesus was wont to rest. It was a large company, made up of soldiers and of the high priest's servants, with staves and clubs and an abundance of torches and lanterns, although it was full moon, for they all knew Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker, and did not know what resistance He might make.

Judas had promised to point out the person they sought by kissing Him. He hurried for-

THE LAST SUPPER

From the fresco by ANDREA DEL SARTO, in the
refectory of the Monastery of San Salvi, Florence.
Painted 1526-7.





ward as they reached the olive-yard, and coming up to Jesus kissed Him tenderly, saying, "Hail, Master." Jesus answered him in words which must have stabbed the betrayer to the heart. "Good friend, wherefore art thou come?" As Judas still stood, brazen-faced, Jesus added, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Then, passing him, He stepped forward towards the soldiers, saying, "Whom seek ye?" They answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am he," said Jesus, approaching them.

His perfect fearlessness and commanding dignity made them afraid that He was about to attack or destroy them. They started back and stumbled to the ground. Again He said, "Whom seek ye?" They made the same answer, and recovering themselves, rose to their feet. Jesus replied again, "I told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way," pointing to His Apostles. The soldiers were only too glad to secure their formidable prisoner thus easily, and Peter and his companions, after one futile blow, fled into the darkness of the olives. Judas' work was done. The soldiers needed him no more. Jesus had no further

word for him. He slunk miserably away. Remorse was already beginning its terrible work.

All next morning there was no more unhappy wretch in the crowd that gathered round Pilate's judgment-seat than Judas. The result of his own baseness was so much more awful than he had imagined. He had not thought of crucifixion, and the hideous fury of the people shook his soul with dismay. He had wanted to be on the winning side, and he had gained only thirty pieces of silver and the contempt even of the priests. And deep within him lay the awful doubt, perhaps growing into a certainty at last, that Peter had been right, and that the Master was no other than the Son of God.

He cursed himself and his lust for gold, and hurrying to the chief priests besought them to take back the money they had paid, crying, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." But his agony only aroused their scorn. "What is that to us?" they asked; "see thou to it." In horror and despair Judas flung the silver shekels at their feet and fled. There was no rest for him. His ears were full of the Master's voice as it had spoken to him so often

in kindness or rebuke. Life was a thing of torture not to be endured.

They found his body broken and horrible, lying among the clay pits of a disused potters' field. It seemed that he had hanged himself, and the cord had snapped and his body had fallen to the earth.

The chief priests would not put the money that had been flung back to them into the Temple treasury, for they said, "It is the price of blood." Their perverted conscience had not forbidden them to take the life of one who was perfectly pure and holy, but they were scrupulous about the use of blood-money. They bought with it the very piece of land whereon Judas had done himself to death, and set it apart as a burial-place for foreign Jews. Truly it was the outcasts' field, and it became known as 'Aceldama,' the field of blood.

Six weeks after the death of Jesus and the suicide of His betrayer, the Apostles and believers in Jerusalem met to fill the vacant place among the twelve. Peter spoke of Judas. But he used no hard words. How could he, when he himself had denied his Lord? He said that

“Judas fell away that he might go to his own place.”

His own place. Alas, how terrible a place had Judas won for himself. He had been so near our Lord for three long years, had seen so much that was gracious and beautiful, and had he but been faithful, might have won glory beyond the pictures of his poor sordid imagination. Instead, his name is a byword for all time.

Whenever for a moment we feel our own will to be better than that of our Master, whenever we feel the love of money and pleasure grow strong within us, let us bring to mind the Betrayer. Men still sin the sin of Judas, and give up the Lord who loves them, for gain. And there are others like this traitor who seem to follow as disciples, but they are the hypocrites of the church, seeking to make profit of their Lord.

O God! preserve us from the double heart, and the rebellious will. Save us from the sin of Judas.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SAUL THE JEW.

JUST about the same time that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, another Jewish child called Saul was born hundreds of miles away in the city of Tarsus, the capital of the province of Cilicia, whose shores were washed by the same sea as beat upon the low-lying coast of Judæa. It was a beautiful town in which to grow up. Through it ran a noble river, which had its source in the snowcapped mountains to be seen from the city walls. And it was a very busy place. The river was crowded with ships and the streets with men from many lands, so that the boys and girls who grew up there became familiar with people in strange dress and speaking foreign tongues.

Like Glasgow or Chicago, the city was not only noted for its commerce, but also for its

learning. Its University was the third in reputation in the world of that time, coming next to those of Athens and Alexandria.

Saul was a very brilliant child, and with a splendid memory for faces and people and books ; always eager to know, and remembering what he learned. His father was a wealthy merchant, who could easily have sent him to the University, but being a very strict Jew, probably he kept his clever son as much as possible apart from the people of the city, who worshipped many gods and goddesses, and were less pure in their lives than those who had been taught the ten commandments.

His father was not only a wealthy but also a distinguished man, for he had become a Roman citizen, though not living in Rome. Either he had paid a great price for this honour, or had received it as reward for some important services to the Roman State. It gave him many privileges, and if ever accused of wrongdoing, he could demand to be tried by the Emperor of Rome himself. His son Saul inherited this honour. But both father and son were prouder of being Jews than of belonging to so conspicu-

ous a capital as Tarsus, or of bearing the title of Roman citizen. They were of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, and though living in a foreign land and heathen city, were most careful to keep all the laws and rules commanded by the rabbis.

It was very natural, then, seeing that Saul showed so much talent, to send him to Jerusalem when quite a youth to study with the famous rabbis there in what was a kind of theological college. His father was determined that the youth should be held in honour by his nation as one of the most distinguished students and expounders of the law of Moses. But before Saul went to begin this student life he had to learn a trade, for it was one of the excellent customs of the Jews that everyone, even the richest man's son, whatever he was going to be, must be taught some handicraft.

Saul chose the business of making tent coverings, partly because he could think easily while sewing the long strips together, and partly because it was a common industry in Tarsus, as a great deal of the goats'-hair cloth used for tents was made in the province of Cilicia, from which indeed it

got its name — Cilicium. So the youth went regularly for some weeks or months to sit by one of the humble Jewish tentmakers, until he became skilful in using the needle and in arranging the strips so that the tents might be watertight.

In after life he was very thankful to have learned this trade. For when he became a Christian and a missionary, his family inheritance was for a while unavailable, and he would not take any money from the people he won for Christ, lest men should say he preached from worldly motives. Often he would have been half starving, or he might have lost his independence, had he not been able to ply the trade he had learnt as a lad.

Saul was fortunate when he came to Jerusalem in being taught by the best teacher there, a rabbi called Gamaliel, who was not only learned, but also large-minded, sincere and gentle. There was but one subject of study, the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament. For a century or more the rabbis had been commenting on passages concerning which they differed, and had been discussing various questions as to the details of

conduct lawful for a Jew. The later rabbis recalled and discussed what their predecessors had said; and every young student was expected not only to know the law of Moses and the sayings of the prophets, but also all the smaller rules made by the scribes and their most famous comments.

Many young men would have found the close study of only one book, and of the endless sayings concerning it, very wearisome after the varied life and interests of Tarsus, but Saul did not. He was so devoted a Jew and of so strenuous a nature that in any case he would have studied eagerly for the sake of his race, of his father, and of his own future fame. But besides all this, his heart was set on pleasing God perfectly, and he imagined that the only way to please Him was to keep every small command, and to follow the tradition in every detail of dress and food and behaviour and piety. He gave all his energy to the endeavour to become a Jewish saint as well as a sage. Thus, whatever his faults, he was no hypocrite like many of the Pharisees, who covered up their vices by minute attention to all the burdensome regulations and observances

which had accumulated under the teaching of the rabbis.

Thus, while Jesus was working quietly at the carpenter's bench, careless of the fast-days the later teachers had instituted, and indifferent as to the colour of the tassels on His robe and the length of the fringe, I imagine Saul going to and fro in the Temple courts, his eyes glowing with zeal in his pale, eager face, his memory stored with every precept of the scribes. He never missed a fast or the due number of prayers. The little leathern boxes called phylacteries, which contained a sentence from the Law, were always in their place on his brow and his arm at the hour of worship. Whatever the temptation, he never exceeded the sabbath day's journey of seven-eighths of a mile. And he was not without his dream of ambition. Sometimes there shone before him the vision of the whole world won to the religion of his fathers. He longed to make Jehovah and the Temple and the Law and his Race glorious throughout the earth.

He had finished his education and departed from Jerusalem some time before John the Baptist began his work and Jesus left Nazareth.

All through the wonderful three years of our Lord's ministry Saul was in Tarsus or its neighbourhood, acting as rabbi in the synagogue there, or occupied in some similar work. So he never met Jesus face to face. He never heard the Lord say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."

But no doubt rumours came to him of the work of John the Baptist, and of his popularity with the common people; also of the words and miracles and death of Jesus. We can be almost sure that Saul, the zealous Pharisee, exulted when this carpenter, whom he looked on as a deadly foe of the traditional religion, was put to death. Later came confused statements that this man Jesus had been seen again after His death. To such talk Saul gave no heed. He was, however, deeply moved to learn that the carpenter's followers were very active in Jerusalem, and actually dared to charge the high priest and the councillors with the murder of Jesus. His eye kindled as he thought how he would love to attack and confound these ignorant men, who insulted the chief of their nation and the heads of their religion.

Perhaps it was this purpose which led him back to Jerusalem, or there may have been other causes, as it appears that his sister was married and went to live there about this time. We think that he himself had been married in Tarsus, and that his wife had died young, leaving him no children. Possibly this loss drove him to seek a change. In any case, we find him back in Jerusalem a little more than a year after Jesus' death.

Soon he was in the full floodtide of work as a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. To him they were nothing less than blasphemers, robbing God of glory, and making a mere man, who had deserved to die, equal with Jehovah. He shrank from nothing, and, tender-hearted though he was, could look without wincing on the torture and death of those whom he abhorred. The persecution began in this way.

One of the followers of Jesus, called Stephen, was particularly active, not only in distributing gifts to the poor, to which work he had been appointed, but also in arguing with the Jews, a number of whom from foreign lands had synagogues of their own, and were very deter-

mined in opposing the new faith. Some from Cilicia, and perhaps Saul himself, took part in these discussions; and when these foreign Jews could not silence their eloquent opponent, they had him dragged before the Sanhedrin, and charged him with being a blasphemer.

Saul was now a member of the chief council and heard the address in which, with consummate skill, Stephen showed that all the history of Israel was but leading up to the birth and work and death of Jesus. He ended by telling his hearers that they were betrayers and murderers. Pierced to the heart by such an accusation, they ground their teeth with rage and were ready to tear him in pieces. But he turned from them, and looking up steadfastly into heaven, was granted a vision, and cried, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

At this, they would hear no more. Shouting with one voice against him, they stopped their ears to what they called his blasphemy, and swept him in one wild tumultuous rush out of the council chamber and beyond the northern gate.

The people of the street, excited by their leaders' anger, followed in the crowd, and in a few minutes Stephen had suffered death by stoning, which was the punishment for blasphemy appointed by the law of Moses.

According to the same law, the witnesses against the accused man must cast the first stones. When those who had given testimony against Stephen began to lay aside their garments to be free for their shameful work, they looked round for a friend to take charge of them, and brought them to Saul; from which we gather that he had been one of the most active in arranging for the accusation and knew the witnesses well. He stood there, with the robes of the executioners at his feet, and saw for the first time how Jesus had taught men to die. As the stones crashed upon Stephen, he called upon the Lord, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then, sinking to his knees, he prayed, as the dying Saviour had done, for his murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

A strange kind of blasphemer, this man with

the angel-look, praying for his murderers with his last breath. But Saul stood unmoved. He approved of such deaths, even of the death of one with such a rare and beautiful soul as Stephen. Apparently he had no thought that he could be doing wrong. He turned away to give himself fiercely to the work of persecution.

On that day there blazed out the smouldering hatred against "The Way," as the Christians were then called in Jerusalem. Men and women, old and young, were dragged to prison and sorely punished if they would not deny their Lord. And Saul was always found foremost among the persecutors. Thus all his splendid intellect and fiery strength and whole-hearted energy were being spent in resisting God's will and in wounding God's Son. He was blind indeed.

We see, then, that it is possible for a man to be displeasing the Father in heaven most grievously without any rebuke from his conscience. Unless we have sought all the light we can receive, we dare never be satisfied, even when the inward voice upbraids us not. Sometimes it is those with the most fatal sick-

nesses who feel sure that they are not ill at all, or that they will certainly recover. Just so, those who need God's mercy most may be least aware of their desperate danger. It is easy, fatally easy, to blind the eye of the soul.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAUL THE CHRISTIAN.

SAUL was whole-hearted in everything he undertook, and he could not rest until he had striven to uproot the followers of Jesus. But he soon found that the task was greater than he had expected. No sooner had they been scattered from Jerusalem, or driven into hiding in its cellars and secret places, than news came that they were appearing in other towns, and wherever they went, were speaking of their Lord. The tidings from Damascus was especially serious, for there quite a little colony of those belonging to "The Way" had soon established themselves. Saul determined to root them out, and obtained letters from the high priest, giving him authority to bring the offenders bound to Jerusalem. With a strong company, that he might be able to

convoy his expected prisoners, he set off on his expedition.

As it is at least a week's journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, he had plenty of time for quiet thought, the more so as the road strikes across a desert, where the arid expanse offers little to attract the eye. As he travelled, he reviewed the past weeks, and, for the first time, his mind became uneasy. Could he be quite sure he was doing the work of God? Perhaps the face of Stephen rose before him, so unlike the face of one who was under divine wrath. Possibly he remembered how convinced every prisoner had been that the man Jesus had actually risen from the dead to be the Lord of Heaven. And it may be that he contrasted with his own dissatisfaction the perfect peace of those who trusted Jesus; for to keep the Law without a failure seemed impossible, and he was not at rest.

But whatever his thoughts were, he crushed them down and only pressed on the faster towards Damascus. It was almost noon tide as he drew near the city. Most travellers would have halted to escape the fierceness of the midday sun, but he hurried on. The white houses in the midst of

the gardens of the green valley of the Abana gleamed before his eyes, tired with days of desert travel. With its cool streams and abundant shade and fair flowers, the scene presented an inviting contrast to the unvarying prospect of yellow and cinder-coloured soil. And the gladness of the life of subjection to Jesus offered just such a contrast to the intolerable laboriousness of trying to keep the petty rules and to follow the dull ceremonies of the rabbis. This, Paul was soon to know.

Suddenly a light, which overpowered even the brightness of the noonday sun, shone about him, and he fell to the earth as if smitten by lightning. While he lay there, he heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He knew it was a message from the Unseen, and answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" Then came the words which changed his life and shattered his pride: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." Jesus! the familiar, hated name. This was Jesus speaking from heaven with the voice of God. What thoughts flashed through Saul's mind. Then Jesus *had* risen from the dead. He *was* the

Christ and the very Son of God. The past months were one long, horrible mistake, and every blow dealt at one of these believers had been dealt at Jesus. These misgivings by the way had been heaven-sent, and in resisting them he had been resisting a Master, and had suffered, like the silly oxen, who resisting their driver, only feel the point of the goad wherewith he guides them press deeper in their flesh. This moment of time was to Saul like many years. In it he reviewed his life and submitted his will to this new-found Lord.

Trembling he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said to him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Slowly and painfully he raised himself from the earth, but when he opened his eyes, it was upon darkness. His fellow-travellers, who had been standing speechless, having heard a voice but seen no person, now took Saul's hand and guided him—for he was quite blind—to his appointed lodging. There he sat, sightless, for three days and nights and would taste neither food nor drink. He was thinking, thinking. He had so much to think about,

many mistakes to correct, many deeds which he now knew to be sins to lament. The old life was shattered. A new life was to begin under a new Lord, and this Lord had died on the cross as if the wickedest of men, but was now enthroned in heaven.

Well might Saul sit in amazement and ponder all that had happened. For it was the ascended Lord Himself who had left the heavenly places to change this fierce foe into a friend, and to make of him a new Apostle. The light, stronger than the noonday glare, was the brightness of His glory. The voice was His voice, the same, though Saul knew it not, which had said to Peter, "Follow me," and "Feed my sheep." From that hour Saul loved to call himself the slave of Jesus. His one thought was to live for this Heavenly Master and to know Him better. Of all Jesus' friends, there was none who loved Him more passionately or was quicker to learn from Him than Saul.

As the three days and nights wore away, peace began to enter Saul's heart. It was as when the fire has burned the rough heather to its roots and the tender green begins to appear upon the

blackened hill-face. He saw that the Lord had brought pardon to men, and that this gift had only to be received and the will given into His keeping. He felt like a little child, very weak and with everything to learn, but very teachable, and at rest, and safe in his mighty Lord's keeping. At last he began to pray as he had never prayed before, and while he prayed, he saw in a vision a man, whose face he did not know, but whose name he became aware was Ananias, come to him and put his hands on him so that he was able again to use his eyes.

The vision came true. There was a man called Ananias living in Damascus. He was one of the chief believers in Jesus, one of those Saul had hoped to take a prisoner to Jerusalem. At that very hour the Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision and said: "Arise and go to the street which is called Straight and enquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold he prayeth." But Ananias was afraid to go, having heard such reports of Saul's violence against all those who called on the name of Jesus.

When he told his fears to the Lord, this

was the answer he received: "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." Then Ananias lingered no longer. Quickly finding the house, he went up to the blind man and laid his hands on him and said in the kindest tone, "Brother Saul." That word must have touched the former persecutor to the quick. The fetter prepared for Ananias had scarcely been laid aside, and yet Ananias called him brother. "Brother Saul," said Ananias, "the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." At these words, his sight grew suddenly clear as if scales had fallen from his eyes. He was faint with hunger, but he would not touch food until he was baptized. Then he ate and felt his strength return. The great change was over. The new life was definitely begun.

Saul was the last man to conceal this great change. He burned to repair his errors and to recall his blasphemies against Jesus. Immediately

he appeared in the synagogue of Damascus, and began to proclaim that Jesus was the Son of God. His hearers were filled with amazement, for they knew from his companions that this was the man who had made havoc in Jerusalem of all who called on Jesus' name. Yet they were not convinced ; they argued with him and sought to prove him wrong out of the Scriptures. But their arguments only stirred him to state more clearly what by his own experience he knew to be true—that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

For this purpose, and to ponder the new truths which crowded on him, he retired for some time to Arabia and spent his days alone in study and prayer. We do not know where he went, but perhaps it was into the neighbourhood of Sinai where Moses had led the people of Israel and had received the Law, and where, later, Elijah took refuge and gained new strength when he fled in despair from Queen Jezebel. At any rate, when he returned to Damascus, he had gained something from both Moses and Elijah. He was able to prove now that Jesus was predicted even in the Law of Moses, and the fearlessness of Elijah had passed into his soul. The Jews could

neither silence him nor could they prove him wrong, and maddened by his ceaseless attacks they plotted to put him to death.

The plot was discovered, but his enemies were so determined that they watched the city gates both by day and night to set on him if he sought to escape. His friends, however, hit upon a plan whereby his life was saved. One of them secured a house on the wall, with a window looking out across the country. Through this they lowered him by night in a basket. He reached the ground safely, and vanished in the darkness. That was the first of many attempts on his life, but his courage only rose with each new danger. For the sake of the Lord he had denied, he would face any risk or toil.

Making his way back to Jerusalem, he met with a great disappointment. He sought to join himself with the Apostles and fellow-believers there, but they all shunned him like a leper. It seemed to them just a deep scheme to capture and destroy them all. His face and his past were too well known. What! the persecutor one of themselves! They would not believe it.

But one man amongst them felt differently. This was Barnabas, a devoted disciple, who had sold his estates and given the money for the poor. He was full of sympathy and kindness, and being convinced that Saul's story was true, he brought the new friend to the Apostles and persuaded them to welcome him.

Thus recognised, Saul poured out his fiery soul in argument and appeal, addressing himself especially to the Greek-speaking Jews, who had had the chief hand in killing Stephen. They could not withstand his arguments, and, like the Damaseenes, determined to put him out of the way. But his fellow-believers heard of the plan, and, having formed a body-guard, went with him to the seaport Cæsarea, and saw him safely off to his old home. He came back to Tarsus, and for some years vanishes from our sight. He spent the time quietly labouring in that city and in the district round about, waiting for the Lord's fuller call.

Just as Peter went back to his home for a while, after having yielded his life to Jesus' control, and later forsook all to follow the Lord, so Saul, having made the great decision, remained in

retirement for a number of years ere he was launched on his career as the Missionary of the world. But he was content to wait. The slave of Jesus was willing either to lead in the assault or to watch the tents in the rear. His Master's will was his peace, for his Master was the Lover and Saviour of his soul.

CHAPTER XXV.

PAUL THE MISSIONARY.

SOME of the believers in Jesus who were driven out of Jerusalem by the persecution which began with the death of Stephen, travelled to the island of Cyprus, and into Syria and North Africa. Wherever they went, they spoke to the Jews concerning Jesus, declaring that He was the true Messiah and that He had risen from the dead. The preaching of these unknown men was particularly successful in the city of Antioch, the capital of Syria, a large town with half a million inhabitants which lay between Jerusalem and Tarsus. Far more Greeks than Jews dwelt there, and these missionaries began after a while to appeal to the Greeks as well as to the Jews.

This was a significant change of plan. In Jerusalem, of course, work had been confined to

the Jews, for there were few foreigners, and in other towns the Apostles and their helpers had only spoken in the synagogues. It is true that Peter had accepted Cornelius and his friends as Christians though they had only become partly Jewish, but this was not as yet a general rule. Even Peter had not attempted to go on preaching to Greeks. However, these earnest preachers in Antioch never stopped to think if it was right to call the Greeks directly to Jesus without first inviting them to become Jews. They preached Jesus Christ; the Greeks heard, believed, forsook their gods and goddesses and asked to be baptized. It seemed perfectly natural to receive such converts. And yet it was a great step in advance.

If a child is sent to gather flowers, and is only allowed to gather garden flowers, or at the most wild flowers which have been transplanted into a garden, her nosegay will be smaller and less varied than if she is allowed to gather all flowers, whether they grow in the garden or in the meadow or in the lane. Up to the present the Apostles had only been winning men for the Lord Jesus out of the little garden of Judaism,

but now these unknown workers began to gather along the wide roads and in the broad fields of the Gentiles. God was working quietly to throw open the gates of the Spiritual City to all men, and He chose to do this not simply by His foremost Apostle Peter, but also by these merchants and workmen who came to live in Antioch.

The church in this great city grew so fast that the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of it and sent Barnabas to cheer on the workers and to guide the converts in the right way. He soon found the work was greater than he could undertake, and he bethought himself of Saul. He had only known Saul for a fortnight in Jerusalem eight years before, but he remembered the devotion and learning of the former persecutor, and as Tarsus was not far off, he went thither to seek this new helper and brought him to Antioch. There they worked together for a whole year, and many people heard the good news of the Saviour.

The believers in Jesus became so well known in this city that a new name for them was invented there. In Jerusalem they had been called the people of "The Way," but as they so often spoke of Jesus as the Christ or the Anointed One, this

word Christ caught the ear of the dwellers in Antioch, and the believers came to be known not as the Jesus-people, but as the Christ-people—Christians. It was a nickname, but spread widely, and was soon recognised as an honourable title.

At this time, a prophet called Agabus came from Jerusalem, and predicted that there was to be a famine throughout the Roman Empire. Prophets in the early church did the work of preachers, but sometimes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they foretold the future. The Christians in Antioch believed Agabus and resolved upon a very kind deed. They had been told that their fellow-believers in Jerusalem were much poorer than themselves, so they agreed to make a collection week by week on their behalf. Thus when the famine duly appeared, in the days of the Emperor Claudius, a good deal of money had been collected, and Barnabas and Saul were appointed to carry the relief to Jerusalem, and to administer it there.

The desire seems to have entered into Saul's heart at this time to stay and work in Jerusalem. He loved the city where he had studied so many years, and longed to undo the wrong he had

wrought there as a persecutor. But the Lord had other plans for him. While he was praying in the Temple one day, and seeking guidance for his life, he fell into a trance, that is a waking dream, in which the Lord appeared and said to him: "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me." Saul was full of sad memories, and had been tracing step by step the sins of his persecuting days, so he answered: "Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and consenting and keeping the garments of them that slew him."

I think that Saul meant to plead to be allowed to work where he had persecuted, but the Lord answered him by one short command, such as a general gives on the eve of a great battle, "Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles." Then Saul did not delay. As soon as his work of charity was completed, he returned with Barnabas to Antioch, to await further guidance.

This was not long delayed. God always blesses a church which is self-denying and charitable. After the Christians in Antioch had sent their gifts to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit gave them the honour of taking the lead in sending the good news to the world. One day when the chief men of the congregation were engaged in prayer and fasting, they were all impressed with the conviction that they ought to set Barnabas and Saul apart for new work. It was as if they heard the Spirit's voice saying plainly, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Then they appointed another day of fasting and prayer, in which they laid their hands solemnly on the two friends, and sent them away. Thus were sent forth the first two foreign missionaries specially appointed by a church.

Barnabas was the leader of the expedition at first, and he chose as their field of work the island of Cyprus, where he was well known. They went through the island, preaching to the Jews in the synagogues of the different towns, but they met with no great success. Finally they came to a town called Paphos, where the Roman

Governor, Sergius Paulus, lived. He was a very intelligent man and much interested in any strange or new philosophy, and for this reason often talked with a Jew called Bar-jesus, who was a magician and professed to be able to prophesy.

There were in the Roman Empire many such sorcerers, who were sometimes sincere and gifted with knowledge of some of the secrets of nature, but for the most part were pretenders, seeking to make money by their arts. They often opposed the teaching of the Christians, and asserted that they could offer in their mysteries a better religion. The first battle between these false teachers and the preachers of Jesus was fought here, and the fight was renewed again and again in other places.

The Governor having heard of the strangers, had invited them to address him, and was deeply interested in what they said. The magician, afraid that he would lose his influence with his patron, rudely interrupted and contradicted Paul and Barnabas, endeavouring to discredit them. Barnabas said nothing, but Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking not of his own will but

controlled from above, fastened his piercing eyes on the enemy of truth and cried : “ O, full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? And now, behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” Immediately a mist and a darkness fell on the sorcerer, and he groped about for some one to lead him away. The Governor was much impressed, and seeing what had been done at Saul’s command, believed.

This was Saul’s first miracle. The Governor was the first eminent convert on this expedition, and the first Roman Christian of whom we hear. From that hour Saul was the leader of the party, and as his work lay more and more among the Greek-speaking peoples, he is known hereafter by his Greek name Paul. Some of the Jews had two names, one a Hebrew name, used among their own countrymen ; the other, a Greek one, used among strangers. This was the case with Saul otherwise called Paul, under which name he is known to-day through the length and breadth of the world.

The little party now took ship and landed in a province of Asia Minor called Pamphylia, to the north-west of Cyprus, intending to preach throughout its towns. But here their plans had to be changed, for Paul fell sick, the country being marshy and unhealthy. We are not quite sure what his illness was, but it appears to have been a kind of malarial fever with sickness, fits of chill and trembling, and fearful headache. And this illness returned again and again. Paul himself tells us about it in a letter to the Corinthians. He calls it "the stake in the flesh," as if he had felt his head pierced and split in hours of extreme pain.

In the East there is little privacy, and we can understand Paul's feelings in a strange town when suddenly seized with this disorder, shaking in every limb and scarcely able to raise his head, and often with the barest of shelters. Three times he asked the Lord to take away this illness, and three times the answer came: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." So for some months at least, Paul suffered from frequent attacks of this illness. He bravely and un-

complainingly took up this burden and pressed on to do his work.

But he would only have grown worse if he had stayed in the close air of the marshy land, and he therefore decided to strike for the inland cities in another province, which was chiefly formed of a high table-land, 3000 feet above the sea. But one of the party, John Mark, Barnabas' nephew, would not accept this change of plan. Perhaps he was afraid of the journey through the mountains, where the roads were rough and the robbers many and comforts very few. He turned home-wards, but the two friends pressed on and after hairbreadth escapes arrived safely at a second city of the name of Antioch, where, until driven out by the hatred of the Jews, they preached, and won many people to the Saviour. Then they passed through other cities until they came to a place called Lystra, where a strange adventure befell them.

One day as Paul was addressing a crowd which had gradually collected round him in some open place in the town, he observed among his listeners a crippled man whose face was lighted with an intense interest. He was evi-

dently absorbed in what he was hearing, and Paul discerned that his faith was so strong that it would be possible to heal him. So the Apostle cried in a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet," and immediately the cripple leapt up and walked. The excitement of the onlookers was great, for through some weakness in his feet the man had been lame from his birth, and was known throughout the town.

Only one explanation of the miracle seemed possible to them. Paul and Barnabas could be no other than two of the gods whom the whole city worshipped. Barnabas, because of his imposing appearance, they took to be Jupiter, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, Mercury, the messenger of the gods. They believed this the more readily because of an old legend which told how two gods had already once visited the earth and sought the shelter of a peasant's hut.

So convinced were the people, that the story was quickly carried to the priest of the temple of Jupiter, which stood close by the city gates, and he brought sleek, cream-coloured oxen, decked with garlands of flowers, to offer sacrifices to the two strangers. Now in the hubbub and

ST. PAUL AND ST. BARNABAS AT LYSTRA

From the cartoon by RAPHAEL, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. Painted 1513-1514.



excitement, the citizens had spoken only their own language and not the Greek which they had learned, and for a little while Paul could not understand their preparations.

But when the truth became clear to him and his companion, they were filled with disappointment and consternation. They rent their garments, and going hither and thither among the multitude, cried out in the Greek tongue, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is; who in the generations gone by, suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness."

Paul was too wise to try to preach to them about the Lord Jesus at that moment. They would just have imagined that he proclaimed some additional new god of whom they had not heard. He sought to lead them to think

of the one God and to give up their fanciful religion which filled heaven with many gods, some good and some bad, none wholly good and a few altogether bad. With such words, they barely succeeded in preventing the multitude doing sacrifice, but at last the people turned and sullenly left them.

From that time they regarded the two missionaries with dislike and suspicion, and when a little later there arrived some Jews, who had tracked Paul and Barnabas in order to hinder their work, it was not difficult to stir up an attack. A mob fell upon Paul, who as leader had aroused most ill-will, and after stoning him dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But as the disciples he had won gathered round him in sorrow, he came to himself, and rose up and returned quietly to his lodging. Next day, he did not turn homeward. What were bruises and wounds to him when he was on his Master's business? He went on to the last town he had marked out for himself and preached there also. Then, with his companion, he carefully retraced his steps, visiting every city where he had won believers, many or few; and having arranged them

in each place into a congregation, he appointed elders to take charge of its business and worship. Finally they took ship and returned to the greater Antioch, the capital of Syria, from which they had been sent forth many months before. Great was the interest in the church when they heard the exciting story of the missionaries' travels and escapes, and great the joy when they saw how constantly God had guarded His servants, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

Thus, though Paul was kept waiting eight years at Tarsus after he had become a disciple of Jesus, at last he was called to do important work. Our Lord Himself passed thirty years of waiting before He began His ministry, and John waited forty years before he wrote his first book, and nearly seventy years before he wrote his greatest book, his gospel. We need patience if we are to do God's will perfectly. Sometimes He tells us to do quiet work for many years and then asks us to attempt some great thing. But whatever be the work, we must ever wait His bidding, Whose we are and Whom we serve.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAUL ON HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

IN the autumn of the year 50 A.D., three weary travellers might have been seen approaching the famous seaport of Troas or Troy, on the extreme north-west edge of Asia Minor. One of them was young but less robust than his older companions, another was a strong quiet-looking man. The third fixed the attention at once. His hands though finely made had been roughened and tanned by hard work, but he had the face of a thinker, and eyes which glowed like burning coals. At first glance he might have been thought weakly, for he was not tall or muscular, and he bore the mark of illnesses and of ill-usage on his body; but he was wiry and vigorous, and though travel-stained stepped out briskly. He had never been in this town before

and scarcely knew why he had come. He was at the end of a long journey, and again and again he had prepared to halt or had tried to turn to the right or the left, but had always been driven forward by an unconquerable impression that his work lay still in front of him. This was Paul with his companion Silas and his young helper Timothy.

On the day of his arrival, Paul met a Christian physician, well known to us by the name of Luke, who belonged to Philippi in the province of Macedonia but apparently was practising in Troas. It may have been an attack of Paul's old illness which led him to seek a doctor, but in whatever way he chanced on this Macedonian citizen, the meeting was of importance.

That evening he dreamed that he saw a man, whom he knew to be a Macedonian, standing by him and urging him to cross the sea, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." There was nothing distinctive in either the dress or the speech of the Macedonians, so that the dream-visitor must have been known by face to the Apostle. In all probability it was no other than the Macedonian physician whom Paul had consulted the previous day.

This dream was to the Apostle a signpost clearly pointing the way. He understood now why he had been hurried on by the Spirit of God to Troas, and was fully persuaded that he was called to cross over into Europe, there to preach the glad tidings of the Saviour. His fiery enthusiasm kindled Luke, who made up his mind to go with this great-hearted man who had suddenly entered his life. It must have been a relief to Paul's mind when he knew that Luke would accompany the little party, for the physician was acquainted with the roads, the cities and the people, and would make it easier to begin the work. So the four took ship, and after little more than a day's voyage landed at the seaport of Philippi, and speedily made their way into that city.

It is of great moment to us that Paul turned westwards on his second missionary journey. If he had turned to the east, our nation might have remained barbarian and heathen for many centuries. But when he entered Macedonia, he began to dig that deep channel through which the Gospel was to flow even as far as our own land.

But where was the Apostle to begin? Philippi was an important city, governed just as Rome was governed, in fact a Rome in miniature. The people were immersed in money-making and in pleasure-seeking, and would not take heed of these humbly dressed travellers, whose real distinction could only be noted at a second glance. The city's indifference seemed impenetrable. Where was the little crack into which he could insert the sharp sword of the Spirit that a beginning might be made? Not even a synagogue was to be found.

But there was a place in the open air by the river-side, where a few Jews gathered sabbath by sabbath for prayer, and thither Paul and his company found their way on his first Saturday in Philippi. The little gathering was chiefly made up of women, but the great preacher was as willing to speak of the Lord Jesus to a few humble folk as to thousands of the great ones of the earth. And he was soon rewarded.

Among his hearers, there was a woman called Lydia, who having forsaken the idols and images of her old religion had become a Jewess. She had crossed over from Asia and carried on in

Philippi the business of selling purple garments which were made and dyed in her old home, a place famous for this work. Though she was a lonely woman, her husband being dead, or having deserted her, her business had prospered and she had a comfortable home.

As she listened to Paul's words concerning Jesus, she was filled with longing to know more of the glad news, and in due time confessed her belief and was baptized. Then, eager to do something for the new faith, she said to Paul, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come unto my house and abide there." She could not preach, but she could help to keep the preachers of Jesus in health and comfort. Even as godly and generous women ministered to our Lord and to His disciples, so Lydia cared for Paul and his fellow-workers. Thus the work began with a gleam of sunshine.

But soon troubles arose. There was a slave-girl in the city who was a ventriloquist, that is one who can speak in different voices and without moving the lips. In addition to this she often seemed to be under the power of some spirit who enabled her to tell people's fortunes, to

guide them to find things they had lost, and so forth. Her masters made a great deal of money from those who came to consult her. One day as Paul and his companions were going to the place of prayer, this girl met them and began to cry after them, "These men are the slaves of God the Highest which announce to you the way of safety." And this she did many days.

She was not really convinced of the truth of the gospel, but her sensitive nature yielded impulsively to the magnetic influence of Paul's joy and vigour, and as was always the case with her, she at once expressed the uppermost feeling in her ill-balanced mind. It was very distressing for the Apostle to be pursued every day by this woman, who seemed half-witted, and was known as a fortune-teller. At last he turned and said to the spirit by whom she felt herself possessed, "I charge thee in the name of Jesus the Christ to go out of her."

At once she became a sane woman, simple and healthy-minded, so that when people came to ask her to divine for them, she could not give the strange answers as of old, which some-

times gave the enquirers the clue they sought. Her masters saw at once that since she had become like other women, the source of their gains was gone, and filled with anger against Paul and Silas, they laid hold of them, and dragged them into the market-place before the magistrates.

The crowd, gathered by the disturbance, caught hold of a false accusation that the missionaries were disturbers of the city, and made so great an uproar that Paul had no opportunity to defend himself. The magistrates without investigating the real cause of the disturbance, tore off the garments of Paul and Silas, and commanded them to be beaten with rods on the spot. When many stripes had been laid on them, and their backs were bruised and bleeding, they were thrust into the inner prison and their ankles made fast in the stocks. Theirs was a miserable plight. They were forced to sit on the damp and filthy earth, with their limbs so cramped that it was impossible to rest, and with their wounds unwashed and their hunger unrelieved.

But they did not lose courage. At midnight, after praying together, they were so full of joy

in the Saviour that they burst into songs of praise, and sang so heartily that the other prisoners heard them. Strange music to rise within these old prison walls, which had so often resounded with curses.

Suddenly, the prisoners heard a very different sound—the crash of an earthquake. The door-posts spread apart, so that the strong bar which secured the doors fell out; the fastenings by which the prisoners had been chained to the walls or shut in the stocks were loosened, and in one moment all were free.

Before they could make a rush for liberty, the gaoler, roused by the noise and the trembling of the earth, was at the entrance. Seeing the doors open, and being unable to perceive anything in the darkness of the cells, he thought all had escaped, and drew his sword, meaning to fall on it and end his life rather than risk torture and death, for he was responsible for his prisoners with his life. But Paul, who could discern the gaoler's form framed in the open doorway against the starlight without, cried in a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Calling for lights,

the gaoler ran hastily into the inner prison, and in extremity of fear, threw himself before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

He had heard enough of these two men to know that they preached "salvation," and he had been struck by their fearlessness and calm the preceding evening. Besides they had just taken the trouble to save his life, though he had treated them shamefully. Clearly they had a secret of peace which he longed to know, for he had stood for a moment on the verge of despair. Paul and Silas answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

By this time all his family and servants were aroused, and in that strange place and at that strange hour the missionaries told how the Lord had died that the worst sinner might be pardoned, and how He had risen from the dead that the weakest might be strong. There and then the gaoler and all his household were baptized, and he immediately set himself to relieve the sufferings of these prisoners whom he now made his guests. Rejoicing greatly in the

good news just heard, he gently washed their stripes and set food before them. The rough, fierce man had become gentle as a woman.

Thus Paul gained converts even within the prison walls, and his spirit was such that he was willing to undergo a hundred imprisonments, if each time he could ensure so rich a result.

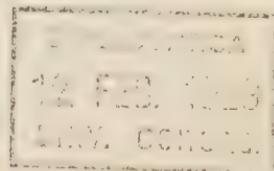
In the morning the magistrates sent their officers, who were called lictors as at Rome, to the prison with this message, "Let these men go." The gaoler came joyfully with the news, but Paul refused to stir. Now that the magistrates had come to their senses, he was determined to read them a lesson, for both Silas and he were Roman citizens, and anyone who beat a Roman citizen unlawfully might be condemned to death, so jealously were the rights of citizenship guarded. So Paul answered : "They flogged us in public without investigation, Roman citizens as we are, and cast us into prison, and now do they turn us out secretly ? Not so, but let them come in person and bring us out."

The magistrates were terrified at this message, for they saw how great a blunder they had made. Coming to the prison, they abjectly besought the

missionaries to leave the city. Paul and Silas yielded to this request, but took their own time. They first revisited Lydia's house, and having cheered the brethren and left Luke to teach them further, they then departed.

We see then that though Paul and Silas were full of the spirit of Jesus and forgave the gaoler his brutal treatment just as the Lord forgave His enemies, they did not believe it was His will that they should suffer injustice without remonstrance. They used their earthly dignity not in their own interest or in a spirit of revenge, but for the honour of the Gospel, and especially for the benefit of the Christians they left behind in Philippi. You may be quite sure that the magistrates were very careful not to interfere with the little church for a good while, knowing that at any time Paul and Silas could bring a charge against themselves for illegal imprisonment and flogging.

The missionaries did not linger in the little villages, but pressed on to the great towns, where there were Jewish synagogues and where people were more intelligent and more ready to listen to the tidings of a new faith. They preached in Thessalonica until they were driven out—though



this did not happen before they had founded a church to which Paul afterwards wrote letters.

They went on to Berea, where the people were eager and searched the Scriptures to test the truth of Paul's arguments that this man Jesus was the Christ. But here also a riot was caused by a visit from the Jews of Thessalonica, who, hating Paul as a renegade, had tracked him to this his next halting-place. So fierce was the feeling that the brethren hurried him down to the seashore, and as a ship was just sailing for Athens, he went on board at once to escape his enemies' clutches, leaving Silas and Timotheus, who were less conspicuous and therefore not in such danger, to follow.

You must not think that Paul was doing a cowardly action when he fled from Berea. You will hear later how he went up to Jerusalem, knowing that persecution and probably death awaited him there. But his life was too precious to throw away in the sudden onset of a mob, and his presence only endangered the new converts. He really showed his courage by escaping. He who is not afraid to seem afraid is the bravest man.

Athens lay in the south of Greece, outside of Macedonia, to which province Paul had felt himself specially called. He had not intended to visit this renowned city, but being sent to it apart from his own will, he was deeply interested in all that he saw and heard, for, as you will remember, Paul belonged to Tarsus, where there was a great university which was in some ways a rival to that of Athens. But the fire of the Gospel burned within him, and though he was only waiting at Athens till his companions rejoined him, he could not rest, for on every hand he saw innumerable idols. The glorious temple which crowned the summit of one of the hills was to a goddess. In every street and shady walk the statues and altars of hundreds of gods and demigods shone white in the sunshine. Only when he looked to the sea or to the sky, could he escape the signs of idolatry.

His spirit was stirred within him, and he not only spoke in the synagogue on the Sabbath to the Jews but every day he went to the market-place, the favourite resort of the loungers of the city, and there he conversed and argued with

chance-comers, telling of Jesus and how He had risen from the dead.

He was wonderfully skilful in speech and in repartee, and as every day the little crowd which gathered round him grew larger, some of the professors and lecturers stopped to listen. We can almost hear them talk. "What is this prater, this outsider talking about?" said some; and others, "He seems to be preaching some new divinities," for he was giving the good news of "Jesus" and "Resurrection," and they thought these were the names of two new gods. But as the philosophers listened, they began to fear lest such an able speaker should become a formidable rival to the orators of the University, so they laid hold of him and compelled him to come before the Areopagus, the council of the city, which had the power either to invite or to forbid lecturers to teach, and which was just then sitting.

He was now called on to explain his new teaching, and that in a set oration. Perhaps his questioners thought he would be overawed in the presence of the councillors and disgrace himself by the feebleness of his speech.

It was indeed a great ordeal, for in addition to the venerable leaders of the city, the Athenians, who were always eager to hear anything new and smart, came crowding to listen to the stranger.

Paul stood up before that brilliant assembly, alone, not a single friendly face in sight, and set himself to persuade his hearers to forsake idolatry and to believe in the one true God.

He began skilfully by saying that they were evidently much interested in religion, for in going through the city and surveying its monuments, he had found, in addition to all the other shrines, an altar “To the Unknown God.” What they worshipped in ignorance, he had come to declare to them. Then he divided his address into two parts, and first sought to teach them that God was one great Spirit, and that it was folly to worship Him by images, however costly or beautiful; and second, he told them that God had, in these last years, made Himself known in the man Jesus, who was to be the Judge of all, and had been proved to be the Divine Messenger by the fact that He had been raised from the dead.

Paul did everything he could in this speech to make his hearers well disposed, and as far as possible he avoided arguments which would awaken their prejudices. For instance, he did not quote from the Jewish scriptures of which they knew nothing, but he referred to what their own poets had said, using a well known quotation, perhaps a fragment he had learned in student days in Tarsus. Also he deferred speaking of the resurrection of the Lord until the very end of his address, when he had done his utmost to prepare his hearers for this part of his message, which he knew would seem to them at first wildly improbable.

All was in vain. A mocking laugh went round when Paul talked of "raising from the dead." That was too absurd. They would not stay to listen to his evidence. Others, a little more polite, languidly said they would be glad to hear Paul again, some other time. Only one of the Council and one woman who had been listening at the edge of the crowd and a few others believed. Paul's heart sank. He never felt more lonely than now. The tidings of his blessed Master were only laughed at by almost

all. There was no work for him here. He left the city and turned his steps to Corinth, not far away, but a place of very different character.

Corinth was a great commercial city, full of wickedness, but also full of eager, strenuous life. It was to Athens what Glasgow is to Edinburgh, or what New York is to Boston. Here Paul found a Jew called Aquila, who had recently been exiled from Rome, and who with his wife Priscilla were tent-makers like himself. He found with them a home, and as his scanty store of money was exhausted, he worked at their side, and on the Sabbath went to the large synagogue and spoke his message to the Jews, and as he had opportunity to the Greeks. He was more than ever absorbed in preaching after his failure in Athens, and he did not try again to preach philosophically, but with burning words he told how Jesus loved every one and had been crucified, apparently disgraced for ever; and yet He had risen from the dead and was thus proved to be the Messiah, God's promised Redeemer.

The ruler of the synagogue became a believer, but most of the Jews formed a party against Paul and blasphemed Jesus. At last Paul shook out

his garments as if casting them out from his thoughts and his love, and cried, "Your blood be upon your heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." He never went again to the synagogue in Corinth, but preached continually to the Greeks, so that many believed and joined the little church which had been formed.

But Paul knew his life was in danger, and feared lest his work in Corinth should be stopped as in other places. In Philippi he had suffered and had been cast out; from Thessalonica he was excluded by the magistrates' action; from Berea he had had to flee; in Athens, there was no opening; now in Corinth, the Jews could not pass him in the street without curses. Paul was very weary, brave as ever but tired to death. His Lord knew this, and in the night He spoke in a vision and said, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee, for I have much people in this city." Paul was a new man when he awoke next morning. He looked as if he had had a long rest and become young again. Once more he was strong and buoyant,

and for eighteen months he taught the people and built up the church.

Corinth was the last city in which he stayed to work during this second missionary journey. From it he returned to Jerusalem, and to Antioch, and went on to visit the churches he had founded in Asia Minor. But he could not rest. The fire of exploration and of conquest still burned within him. The world for Jesus was his dream. Since talking to Aquila, his eye was set on Rome and beyond Rome on Spain. His last journey had meant scourging, prisons, hardships, angry faces and threatening tongues, but the work was sweet, for many hearts had been won to purity and peace. And whenever he was ready to slacken his step, he remembered the months of blasphemy and persecution in which he had in his ignorance assailed the Christ, and braced himself again to press forward upon the long march. Had he a hundred years to live and a hundred tongues wherewith to speak, they would all be used for his Lord.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PAUL AT EPHESUS.

THERE was one great city in the East which Paul had not yet visited. Jerusalem, Damascus and Antioch, in Asia ; Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth, in Europe, had heard his message, but Ephesus, the capital of a large Roman province, and one of the most important cities of the ancient world, had been passed by on the second missionary journey, when Paul was hurried into Macedonia.

As he set forth on a third missionary journey in the spring of A.D. 53, Ephesus was the goal at which he aimed, and he stayed there no less than two years and six months, and would not have departed then had he not been driven out. Paul loved the cities as much as Jesus loved the open country. Both gave the

good tidings in the midst of multitudes, but Jesus rarely, if ever, slept within the walls of Jerusalem. Paul, on the other hand, delighted in the thronged streets, the hum of work and business, the rush and pressure of city life. In the midst of crowds there was the danger of opposition, but there was also the great opportunity. He always struck for the heart and brain of the country in which he worked, and it would have been strange had he passed Ephesus by.

Through this great seaport passed much of the trade between Europe and Asia. But the supreme glory of the city was the famous temple which enshrined an image of the goddess Diana, supposed to have fallen from heaven. Thousands of pilgrims came to visit it from the large towns in the neighbourhood, and as they all presented gifts, the priests became immensely rich. The favourite offering was a little model of a temple chamber with a statuette of the goddess within. These were made in terra-cotta, in marble, and also, for wealthy people, in silver. A great many craftsmen, who thus drew their livelihood from the temple, lived in the city, as also a multitude of fortune-tellers, wizards and

magicians, who pretended to read the future and to be able to avert danger from such as paid them well.

Into this large city, one of the worst centres of idolatry and superstition, Paul entered on foot one day in the autumn of 53. He was soon settled with his friends Aquila and Priscilla, of whom you have already heard, and worked every day at his trade of tent-making. He might have been found any morning before dawn shaping and sewing the strips of coarse goats'-hair. In Eastern cities, where the midday heat is intense, all business is over by eleven o'clock, but the remaining hours, during which most people rested and amused themselves, Paul spent in spreading his good news.

At the beginning he went to the synagogue, speaking there on the Sabbath and whenever he could during the week, arguing from the Scriptures and seeking to persuade the Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. But when some, who at first had listened with eager curiosity to what he had to say, began to abuse his religion to the people of Ephesus, he went thither no more. He separated his disciples from the Jews and

assembled them in the lecture hall of a teacher named Tyrannus. This man's lectures were over by eleven o'clock and the Apostle had the use of the room for the rest of the day.

Soon Paul became well known. All kinds of people came to listen to him, including merchants and traders, and even those who had come from the neighbouring cities on a pilgrimage to the temple of Diana. In this way his fame spread throughout the province. Some of the pilgrims who sought him turned to the true God, and later on we find Paul writing a letter to the Christians of Colosse, although he had never visited their town. It lay near Ephesus, and the church there had been founded by some who, while visiting the greater city, had heard him preach, and had believed.

As a rule, Paul wrought few miracles, and indeed they seemed rather to hinder than to help his work, except in so far as the sense of the divine power working through him gave him courage.

But here in Ephesus God gave him the power of healing in great measure, so much so that the sick whom he was unable to visit were

often healed by handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his body. It is not difficult to see the reason why God thus endowed him there. Ephesus was a place where many apparent cures were wrought by the devices of the sorcerers who haunted the city, and when Paul did yet greater deeds in the name of Jesus, people gathered about him as a worker of marvels and he had new opportunities of making disciples.

Now there were some amongst the Jews who pretended to have the power to cast out evil spirits, and when they saw Paul really doing this they determined to imitate his methods by invoking the name of Jesus also.

There were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish priest, who gave themselves very much to this work, and on one occasion two of them, who were seeking to heal a man thus possessed, cried out, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." They were without any real faith, but imagined the mere use of the name to be sufficient. The man leapt upon them like a maniac, tearing and wounding them with nails and teeth, and crying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" They fled from the

house for their lives, with the blood streaming from their wounds and their clothes torn from their backs. The friends of the man they had failed to heal told the story on every side, and those who heard were filled with fear, judging that the name of the Lord must not be used lightly but must be revered as holy.

Perhaps Paul's greatest triumph was when a number of the wizards and fortune-tellers themselves were won to repentance and belief. These men were not content with half measures ; they collected all their books, containing rules for the arts they practised, and piling them up in some public place, made them into a great bonfire. In this way their belief in the true God whom Paul preached was proclaimed to the whole city.

The value of the books that were destroyed was reckoned to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. Had they been less sincere in their repentance they might only have sold the books, but believing the things contained in them to be evil, they were content with nothing less than complete destruction.

Paul was immensely encouraged, and now

began to plan a visit to the capital of the Roman Empire that he might preach there also. But as often happens when an enterprise seems most successful, a great calamity was at hand.

As so many of the Ephesians became Christians and forsook the temple of the goddess, the trade of the makers of votive shrines began to fall off. Demetrius, a silversmith, one of the wealthiest of the craftsmen, having traced the explanation of this state of things to Paul, called a meeting of all the shrine-makers. He made a very skilful speech, appealing first to their pockets, and prophesying that if this Paul was allowed to go on persuading people that there were no gods made with hands, their wealth would vanish away. Then he went on to say, “Not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”

His hearers were filled with anger at these words, and rushed into the street, crying out, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” The people

took up the cry, thinking their goddess was threatened, and forming a tumultuous procession, they rushed pell-mell into the great open-air theatre, and kept on shouting or praying "Great Diana," "Great Diana," "Great Diana," until one would have thought ten thousand dogs were baying at the moon.

Paul heard that two of his companions were in the hands of the mob, and desired on their behalf to speak to the crowd, but his friends and some of the high priests of the city who were well disposed to him would not hear of such a thing. Then the Jews who thought they were being confounded with the Christians in this business attempted to put forth a speaker in their own defence, but not a word could be heard. For two hours the incessant shouts, "Great Diana," were alone audible.

But the town-clerk had been watching his opportunity, and at a favourable moment gaining silence, addressed the multitude. He told them that these Christians could not be proved blasphemers of the goddess or robbers of the temple, and that if Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen had any accusation to bring, the law

courts were open. Then he warned them that they might be punished by the Roman Governor for such an uproar, and so quieting them, he dismissed them to their homes.

They separated, but sullenly, full of threatenings, like the low growling of a thunderstorm which, having passed over our heads, lingers and mutters as it goes. Paul and his friends saw that his life was no longer safe, and he therefore passed forth to Macedonia and Greece to visit the churches he had founded there three years before. But he left a large congregation in Ephesus, and many hearts consecrated to the service of Jesus.

The lion heart of the Apostle did not fail him, but he was ill and weary. Writing a little while afterwards, he spoke of having "been weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." And in another place, he speaks of "having fought with the wild beasts at Ephesus." That angry crowd, thirsting for his blood, seemed to him like the ravening lions and tigers of the arena.

Besides all this, he felt he must go up to Jerusalem with the delegates from the various

churches he had founded, who were carrying the contributions of these churches to the poor of the mother city of Christianity. Yet he foresaw that through the increased hatred of the Jews, persecution and perhaps death awaited him where his Lord had suffered. He did not fear death, but he felt like a mother who has to go a dangerous voyage and leave her little children behind her, uncertain of her return, and feeling that no other can fill her place. Paul knew that the Saviour was guiding his life, and that all was well. He practised what he taught, "that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead," yet he was filled with the inevitable pain of parting from his beloved converts.

A window is opened into his great tender heart in his farewell speech to the Ephesian Elders. The ship in which he was returning to Palestine did not touch at Ephesus, but as she was detained for some days at Miletus he sent for them to come to him there. He reminded them of his tears and trials through the plots of the Jews, and told them how he was now bound for Jerusalem, not knowing what things

should befall him there, but believing that they should see his face no more.

When he thought how he was to be parted from them and would never again be able to warn the careless or sinful in their city he was overcome, and cried, "I testify unto you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." Then piercing the future, he warned them to do their duty as elders, for wolves would enter in to tear the flock when he was not there to protect. And last of all, holding out his hands, scarred with fetters and worn with toil, he bade them remember: "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel, yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

Then nothing was heard but that saddest of

sounds, the weeping of men. Each fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. They accompanied him to the ship, and stood on the shore till his figure faded and the last wave of his hand was seen and the sails were blurred in the distance and dwindled to a mere speck. They had lost him who had saved them and through his own great love had taught them to believe in the greater love of Jesus and in the mercy which dwells in the heart of God.

You have already learned that Paul was great in many ways. Even had he not become a Christian he would have been widely known. He was a great thinker, and some of his letters are the profoundest and sublimest books in the world. He was a great missionary, travelling with unslackening step from city to city, to tell of the love of Jesus. He was great also in business ability, arranging and ordering his churches so that they remained solid as the rocks. He was a great hero, fearing neither fetter nor flame, conspirator nor magistrate, high priest nor emperor. But he was greatest and nearest to his Master

as a lover of men. In his heart were stored the names of a multitude whom he remembered, loved and prayed for. His tears and farewells at Ephesus help us to understand how he won thousands for Christ. It was not so much by the tongue of fire or the brilliant mind as by his deep affection and untiring sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PAUL AT BAY.

WHEN the travellers arrived at Cæsarea, the Roman seaport for Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Christians there, and rested for a little while before completing their journey. Again and again during the last weeks Paul had been told that he was risking his life in going to Jerusalem. Now the clearest warning of all was given.

The same prophet who had predicted the famine a good many years before, arrived in the city, and after he had saluted Paul and his companions, he took the Apostle's girdle and binding his own hands and feet with it, said : “ Thus saith the Holy Ghost, ‘ So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ ”

Upon this, Paul's companions and the Christians of Cæsarea again entreated him not to go on to Jerusalem ; it was not too late to turn back. Why should he persist ?

But Paul answered, " What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart ? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When his friends saw that all their persuasions were powerless as he felt this journey to be his duty, they fell silent after saying, " The will of the Lord be done."

But even Paul would have trembled could he have foreseen the terrible ordeal which awaited him. In one brief week he would have to defend himself first before the common people, thirsting for his blood ; next before the supreme court of his countrymen, where deepest hatred for him was written on many a face ; and finally, before the Roman Governor, in opposition to a practised and professional orator. His position was like that of an army, surrounded on every side by allied forces, assailed every day by a different enemy, and after each victory called to meet a fresh attack. Yet, as you will hear, he stood heroic to the end, and in each battle used

the counter stroke with such skill and force, that his baffled foes fell back, dismayed, and left him unconquered after all their toil.

At first after Paul's arrival all went well in Jerusalem. The handsome contributions from the churches he had founded were presented. He told the last chapters of God's wonderful work through him among the nations, relating in full the difficulties and final victory. As James, the Lord's brother, and his fellow-elders heard his story, they praised God for the extension of His Kingdom, but immediately afterwards showed that their anxiety concerning Paul's visit to the Temple-city was uppermost in their mind.

They proceeded at once to tell him, perhaps with a touch of exaggeration, that tens of thousands of the Jews in Jerusalem had become believers, but that they were still very strict in their observance of Jewish rites, and unfortunately had received the impression that Paul was trying to destroy their ancient religion. Therefore the elders proposed that he should at once show that he was still in close sympathy with all things Jewish by paying the expenses of a vow which four men were about to complete.

Some vows could only be completed at Jerusalem, and when those who had taken the vow were poor, a rich man often associated himself with them for the last seven days, paid all the expenses of the final ceremonies of purifying, and remained with them until their hair which had been allowed to grow during the time of the vow was cut, this being the sign that their obligations had been duly discharged.

Paul had recently become a man of some means, probably through some of his father's property coming to him, and as he ever desired to be all things to all men, he consented to this proposal. Every day for a whole week, he was in the Temple with the four men, taking part in their sacrifices, and giving the completest proof possible that this preacher to the nations, who claimed that Christians need not become Jews, was at the same time not unfriendly to the Temple and its observances. These ceremonies must have seemed somewhat trivial to him, but he was anxious by all means to conciliate those who doubted him.

Unhappily this very plan of the elders was the real cause of the disturbance that followed. It

was Pentecost, and Jerusalem was thronged with strangers. Among them were some Jews from Ephesus, who knew and hated the Apostle because of his work in their city. They had seen him walking in Jerusalem with one of the Ephesian Christians who was not a Jew. As the Apostle had to be constantly in the Temple till the vow was finished, they met him there also and immediately concluded that he had brought his Gentile companion into the sacred enclosure. Laying hold of him, they shouted to the bystanders : "Men of Israel, help. This is the man that teacheth everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place ; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath defiled this holy place."

Immediately an uproar broke out, and the excitable Jews tried to thrust Paul out of the Court of the Women, where they dared not kill him, because human blood would defile the holy place. If they could only get him into the outer court of the Gentiles, there they would wreak their will. Streams of people from the city, hearing a confused noise in the Temple, hurried thither from every quarter, and made the confusion tenfold worse.

Fortunately the Roman Commandant at the Festivals always placed sentinels on the ramparts of the Castle of Antonia, overlooking the Temple courts, for during recent years there had been more than one serious riot originating among the worshippers. Hearing of the disturbance, he hastened down, and in a very few minutes had broken through the crowd, surrounded Paul by his soldiers, and bound him with two chains. He could not learn the source of the uproar, for the noise was deafening, and each one shouted a different answer to his questions, so he hurried his prisoner away, and not too soon, for the mob grew more violent, and made mad dashes on the guards, shouting, “ Away with him ! ” “ Down with him ! ”

All through this wild scene the Apostle had kept perfectly calm, showing no trace of fear, and as soon as he could make himself heard, he said to the chief captain, “ May I say something to thee ? ”

The officer was amazed to hear Paul’s cultivated voice and the Greek tongue, for he had thought that his prisoner was an Egyptian bandit who had lately made himself notorious.

Paul was indeed more a master of himself than his captor was, and went on to say in the same quiet and perfectly self-possessed tone: “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto this people.” The chief captain was conquered by the manner and courage of this man, who was eager to speak to a crowd that five minutes before was ready to tear him limb from limb; and permission was given.

Paul then beckoned with his hand for silence, and from this strange pulpit, the Castle stairs, spoke to the people. The language he used was not Greek, but the common tongue of Palestine, the Aramaic in which Jesus had preached. As soon as the vast audience heard its familiar sounds, they began to listen.

Then Paul told his own life story, and in the most skilful way sought to avoid everything that could prejudice his hearers, striving to convince them that it was by divine miracle and unmistakable guidance that he, brought up as the strictest Jew, had become a believer in Jesus. They listened, half conquered, until he told how the Lord had said, “Depart, for I will

send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles." When they heard that hated word, their anger broke forth afresh. They became like madmen. Tearing off their garments, and throwing dust in the air as there were no stones at hand, they shouted with murder in their voices, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

The chief captain was now convinced that he had to do with some smooth-tongued ruffian, and ordered him to be at once examined by torture. The deadly scourge was made ready and the soldiers stripped him of his garments, showing his back scarred and seamed with old wounds. He was about to be tied with thongs, when he said to the centurion by his side, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?"

There was something in the dignity with which these words were spoken that impressed the officer. He hastily communicated them to his commander, whose whole manner changed when he learned that Paul was not only a Roman citizen, but thus privileged from birth. The secretaries who had been waiting to take

down Paul's confession when tortured were hastily dismissed, and his chains were loosened, for it was unlawful so much as to bind a Roman citizen untried.

But the chief captain was determined to fathom the meaning of this extraordinary bitterness against Paul, so next day he had the Sanhedrin called together and took his prisoner down to speak to them. The Apostle, who had once been a member of this very Council, recognised as old companions some of those who looked so darkly upon him, and, gazing steadily at the assembly, said, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day." It was an appeal to believe at least this of him,—that he was an honest man. He was immediately interrupted, for the high priest, enraged to see him unabashed and calm, commanded the attendants to smite him on the mouth.

In a moment Paul's anger flamed forth fiercely, and he cried out, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" It was a rebuke like a lightning flash, and the high priest sat

cowed and speechless. But the attendants said, “Revilest thou God’s high priest?”

Paul, who had been absent from Jerusalem so long, had not recognised the speaker as the high priest, for that office passed quickly from one to another in those turbulent days. At once he apologised, saying, “I did not know, brethren, that he was high priest, for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people.” He did not feel that he had done wrong in resenting such gross injustice, but he immediately acknowledged that he had spoken too hastily.

Then seeing that it was hopeless to expect justice when the high priest was so prejudiced against him, he cried out, “I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” It was a very adroit thing to say, for the Sanhedrin was divided into two great sections, the Sadducees who denied that there was any life after death, or angels, or spirits, and the Pharisees who believed in the resurrection from the dead. As soon as the rival parties heard this, the Pharisees were up in arms for their favourite doctrine,

and the Sadducees were more than ever violent against Paul. Even though this was the highest court of the Jews, and its members were the sage and venerable of the people, there was soon a furious clamour as they shouted at each other.

The Roman officer, more than ever perplexed by the behaviour of these extraordinary Jews, and fearing from the uproar that his prisoner would be torn in pieces, hurried him back to the Castle, leaving the Council to settle its controversies as it chose.

Many people think that Paul did wrong in telling the Council that he was a prisoner because of his teaching concerning the resurrection ; for, as a matter of fact, the chief accusation against him was that he made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. This half truth on his part seems like deceit. But I do not think it was. We do not know all that happened at the Council, and clearly some discussion concerning the resurrection had been begun among the Councillors, for we are told that he "*perceived* that the one part were Sadducees and the other part Pharisees." Probably the chief reason why the Sadducees, including the high priest, who was

generally of this party, attacked Paul was because he preached so unceasingly that his Lord had risen from the dead. In that case, he would be justified in speaking as he did.

And we are the more sure that he had acted quite honourably because that very night the Lord Jesus came to comfort His most loyal servant. As Paul lay spent and weary on his prison bed, the Lord appeared in a vision to him and said : “ Be of good cheer : for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” There was no one to whom the Saviour more often granted special messages and appearances from Himself than to Paul ; partly perhaps because Paul had never had the privilege of walking at the Master’s side during His days on earth, and partly because the load of anxiety, suffering and labour on Paul’s shoulders was far heavier than that on any other Apostle.

Next day, as the chief captain was sitting in the Castle, a centurion came to him with a young Jew, and a message from Paul that this lad had something to tell him. Immediately the commander led him aside where they could talk

privately. The young man was Paul's nephew, and though apparently not a Christian, he desired to save his kinsman.

He had heard that forty Jews had bound themselves by a vow neither to eat nor drink until they had taken the life of the man they called a renegade. Their plan was to have Paul brought once more before the Council, and to assassinate him on the way to or from the council chamber. This news had been brought to Paul first, and with the practical wisdom he so constantly displayed, he passed on his nephew, the informant, without a word of comment to the commander. The officer's mind was soon made up. Jerusalem was no place for this prisoner. He must be consigned to the immediate care of the Governor of the province at Cæsarea. There, away from the unruly citizens of Jerusalem, he could be judged.

That night any wakeful citizen might have heard the clattering hoofs of a troop of horsemen and the tramp of hundreds of foot soldiers passing through the streets to the gate on the Cæsarea road. Paul was in their midst. The detachment of nearly five hundred men was strong enough to defend him against any

band of assassins. He came safely to the presence of the Governor, Felix by name, and for five days was lodged in Herod's palace, awaiting the arrival of his accusers. The rest and quiet were very welcome, and his heart was at peace, for he had his Lord's assurance that this midnight journey was only a first step on the road to Rome, where above all he longed to preach the Gospel.

The trial before Felix did not last long. The high priest and his companions had secured a well known orator called Tertullus to act as accuser. He began by praising Felix in the most fulsome way, and then heaped abuse upon Paul, declaring that the prisoner was a pestilent fellow, stirring up insurrections among the Jews through the whole Empire, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and a profaner of the Temple. He suggested that it was not needful for time to be spent on the case ; the Governor had only to ask a few questions and he could easily convince himself that these charges were true. The venerable councillors from Jerusalem chimed in and assured the Governor that all these accusations were correct. They hoped to overbear him,

so that Paul might be discredited before he spoke.

The Apostle was as calm before the representative of the Emperor as before the raging mob. When Felix, with a negligent gesture, beckoned to him to make his defence, he began by praising the Governor's knowledge of Jewish affairs. There was no word of flattery or untruth in this preface, but it smoothed the way for Paul's great defence.

He told how he had only spent twelve days in Jerusalem, and was there for no other purpose than to bring alms to his nation. He confessed that he was a Christian, but protested that he had lived in good conscience all his life, and that his character was spotless. Finally, he demanded witnesses to prove the charges made against him. It was a masterly reply, as wisely adapted to the Governor's mind as the speech from the Castle stairs had been to the mob.

Felix, knowing much more about the Christians than the Jews imagined, saw quite clearly that Paul was innocent. He was, however, too politic to set his prisoner free at once. He professed to delay till the commander of Jerusalem could

come to give evidence, but the case was really shelved.

Still, there was something so arresting about Paul, that a little later Felix with his wife Drusilla sent for him that he might address them concerning his faith in Jesus the Messiah. Paul recognised his opportunity. Like a great general, he struck with all his force at the weak spot in his hearers' lives. They had expected an eloquent account of this new religion, but he spoke with terrific solemnity of righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come.

The consciences of the guilty pair awoke, for both had wandered far from the pure straight way. Felix was terrified, for he felt upon him the piercing eyes of an unseen Judge who read him through and through. Only anxious to get rid of Paul, he stammered out, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."

The convenient season never came. Felix did not again risk a troubled conscience, but hoping to be bribed to set Paul free, he kept him in captivity, and left him in prison, when, after two years, a new Governor was appointed.

Paul had all along been treated with indulgence; his friends were allowed to see him and he was granted some amount of liberty. But the months dragged slowly. He still had to stand on guard, and his future was all uncertain. He longed to visit his beloved churches again. Yet he did not fret like an eagle in chains, and the years were not wasted. Long hours were spent in pondering the unsearchable riches he found in his Lord's love and work and plans. Apparently not a single letter was written during this imprisonment, but when he began to write again in Rome, there were a new wealth and depth in his thoughts and teachings, which showed how rich the harvest of the weary months had been.

The new Governor, Festus, made it his first business when he came to Cæsarea to try Paul again.

The Jews repeated the old trumped-up accusations without producing any witnesses, and Paul contented himself with little more than a flat denial: "Neither against the law of the Jews nor against the Temple nor against Cæsar, have I sinned at all." Festus had made up his mind to

release the prisoner, but he wished to please the Jews also, and therefore proposed to try Paul once more in Jerusalem, where there could be no excuse, if witnesses were not produced.

But Paul knew the dangers of a return to Jerusalem. His patience was exhausted. He had still one arrow in his quiver. As a Roman citizen, he had the right to be tried in Rome and by the Emperor. He no longer made an attempt to be suave and gracious, but said : “ I am standing before Cæsar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die ; but if none of those things is true, whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.”

Festus was staggered at the prisoner’s courage and calm decision. With grim suggestion in his voice he replied, “ Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar : unto Cæsar shalt thou go.”

But Paul was to have one more opportunity to be a witness for his Lord, before the voyage to Rome. A king, called Agrippa, and his sister

Bernice, who were nominally of the Jewish faith, came to salute the new Governor. He, finding that they were interested in Paul's story, arranged to have a great court festival with the strange prisoner as the chief attraction. It was the most brilliant assembly on which Paul had ever looked. All the chief captains of the troops and the principal men of the city were invited ; they flocked into the audience chamber after the King and the Governor with their gorgeously robed attendants. The jewels of the ladies rivalled the silver-plated armour of the officers. The aristocracy of Palestine faced Paul as he was brought in at Festus' command.

The Apostle was undismayed. He feared God too much to fear man at all. He loved his Lord too well to crave human praise or earthly splendour. He never spoke more skilfully than on this day.

Once more he told his life story : how the Lord arrested him in his career as a persecutor, and sent him forth to preach a Saviour risen from the dead, who was to be a light both to the Jews and to the nations. Forgetful of his audience and of himself, in the full flood-

tide of eloquence, he was chanting the praises of Jesus, the crucified and the victorious, when Festus suddenly struck in : "Paul, thou art mad : much learning doth turn thee to madness." But Paul answered with perfect self-control, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness." And immediately he appealed to the King if the facts he had recounted were not well known.

With a sudden longing to win for Christ this young monarch, whose sinful career he knew well, Paul cried, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest." Agrippa answered sneeringly, "With but little persuasion thou thinkest to make me a Christian." With impassioned voice and gesture, his fettered hands outstretched in solemn assertion, Paul answered, "I would to God that whether with little or with much persuasion not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds." The prisoner had become too solemn and personal for the assembly to be continued. The King rose from his throne, and the gathering was at once dismissed. But Paul had made a deep

and favourable impression. On many a lip was heard the saying: "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." Even Agrippa said to Festus, "He might have been set at liberty, had he not appealed to Cæsar."

Thus Paul honoured his Master in his father-land. Before the citizens and before the councillors, in the law court and in the levee, he showed himself a heroic man, a consummate orator, a courteous gentleman, and a preacher of terrific solemnity and most tender appeal. Had he been on only one occasion sullen or blundering or insincere or timid, his Lord and the Church would have been misrepresented if not disgraced. But through the grace the Christ gives His own, Paul did not fail. When he was on the blue waves of the Mediterranean, on that perilous voyage to Rome, the name of Jesus was more widely known, more highly honoured, and more deeply loved in the land we call holy, than ever before. Paul had not stood at bay in vain.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PAUL ON THE SEA.

IT must have been with a sense of relief that Paul saw the towers of Cæsarea grow dim behind him as the ship furrowed its way northward. It was about the middle of August, 59 A.D., and the time of weary suspense was over at last. He could now relax his unceasing vigilance. True, he was a prisoner, but he was treated as a man of distinction, and received much consideration. Further, his friends Aristarchus and Luke the physician were with him, apparently being permitted to accompany him in the guise of slaves. Best of all, he was on his way at last to Rome, the capital and centre of the Empire on which his hopes had been fixed for years.

The voyage was uneventful until the party

reached Myra, a seaport of Asia Minor. There the centurion in charge of Paul and the other prisoners changed ships and embarked them on a large vessel carrying grain to Rome from Egypt, the land whence most of the wheat for the capital came. Their course was now almost due west, and as the prevailing wind in the late summer is westerly, their progress was very slow. With difficulty they managed to run under shelter of the island of Crete, and the wind being still dead against them, they anchored for several days in a little bay called Fair Havens.

Here a council was held by the leading officers as to what was to be done. The most dangerous season, from the middle of September to the middle of November, was close at hand. It seemed hopeless to continue their voyage until the stormy season was over; but it remained to be decided whether the ship should remain in her present anchorage or make an attempt to reach another harbour more favourably situated only twenty miles away. Paul, who had had a great deal of experience as a traveller, and who had evidently made a favourable impression on the centurion, was

allowed to give his opinion. He urged very strongly that they should winter where they were, and prophesied that if the voyage was continued at that time, both passengers and cargo would be exposed to serious danger. But he was overruled, for both the captain and the sailing-master of the vessel thought that they should make for the more convenient harbour.

Soon after this discussion the wind went round to the south, and thinking their opportunity had come, they weighed anchor and, rounding the cape in the shelter of which they had been lying, began their three hours' voyage across a bay to the seaport of Phenice.

They never reached it. When half way across, a tempestuous north-east wind burst upon them from the lofty mountains of Crete, and they were driven out to sea. As their intended voyage was to have been so short they had not troubled to hoist their boat on deck but had left it towing from the ship's stern. So sudden was the storm, that but for the timely shelter of a little island it could not have been got on board. Powerless in such a gale, they were speedily blown out of sight of

land, and fearing that they might be driven into the great quicksands which lay to the north of Africa, they shortened canvas and drifted before the wind.

The great mast which upheld the one enormous sail used in these ancient vessels, throbbed and trembled under the fearful gusts, and so strained the ship that the sailors began to pass ropes underneath her keel, and to tie them tightly across the deck, lest she should spring a leak and founder.

The next day, their plight became still more pitiable. Nearly three hundred people were crowded together in but scanty accommodation. As the wind had not moderated in the least, a large part of the cargo, and even the ship's furniture, was thrown over, that she might drift less heavily. Neither food nor sleep nor any comfort was possible for the wretched crew and passengers. For days together the sky was thickly shrouded, so that neither sun nor star could be seen. Almost all gave up hope of being saved. The only question was, How long could the ship hold together? Was the end one or two or three days distant?

Then Paul stood forth in the midst of them as they huddled together where they were least exposed to the drenching spray and rain. He was as calm and cheerful in his bearing as when the sun shone brightly in the port of Myra.

This was his message: "Sirs, the right course was to hearken to me and not to set sail from Crete and incur this trouble and loss. And my advice to you now is to take heart, for loss of life there shall be none among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God Whose I am, Whom also I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul, thou must stand before Cæsar; and lo! there have been granted thee by God all they that sail with thee.' Wherefore, sirs, take heart, for I believe God, that it shall be so as it hath been spoken unto me. Howbeit we must be cast on some island."

We can almost see Paul holding on to some shroud, scarcely able to keep his feet, as he shouts these sentences one by one, his voice half-drowned by the storm. They do not flow easily as in his speeches made before the Jews or before Agrippa. We can hear that he is trying his utmost to make himself heard, and yet he is

courteous and serene as ever. He knew that he was as near heaven by sea as by land and felt the Everlasting Arms about him even amid the devouring waves.

His words did something to rouse the sailors from their hopelessness, and on the fourteenth night they heard the roar of breakers and guessed that they must be near land. They took soundings twice, and found the water grew rapidly shallower; fearing that the ship might be dashed on rocks in the darkness, they cast out four anchors from the stern, and longed for daylight. Any moment the anchor chains might part, or the anchors drag, and then no effort could save them from destruction.

If only the daylight would come they might steer into some creek and find a chance of safety. For this purpose they had cast the anchors from the stern, so that the ship's prow should be in the right direction when they should make for the shore. But the sailors pretended that they must also anchor her by the bow, and lowered the boat, really intending to desert the ship. Paul, ever watchful, guessed their purpose, and knowing that their presence was absolutely

necessary for the safety of the passengers, instantly gave the alarm to the centurion.

There was no time for parleying. Just as the sailors were about to spring into the boat, the daggers of the soldiers severed the rope, and it vanished into the blackness of the night. The crew, thus compelled to take their chance with the rest, were driven to do their best.

As the dawn broke on the wild scene, the misery of Paul's fellow-passengers was more than ever evident. For days they had eaten nothing, and they were plainly incapable of the exertion necessary to reach the land. He had received God's promise that all should be saved, and believed it implicitly; but to him that was no reason why they should not themselves do their utmost. He therefore besought them to eat, saying, "I beseech you to take some food, for this is for your safety, for there shall not a hair of your head perish." He himself set the example, by beginning to eat, having first given thanks to God. Then they were all of good cheer and began also to take food, and when their hunger was satisfied, they threw

overboard the remaining cargo, for the ship was now leaking badly, and rode heavily.

When the day was fully come the captain discerned a little bay, and determined to try to reach it. He slipped the cables, hoisted the foresail, and steered with all care for the open beach. Chancing on a shoal between two tideways, the prow stuck firm, but the stern, lashed by huge waves and unsupported, immediately began to break up.

Paul had stood in danger from the desertion of the sailors ; now he was in danger from the onset of the soldiers. Fearing that their prisoners would escape, in which case their own lives would be forfeit, they drew their swords to kill them all. But the centurion, who knew that he owed his life to Paul's vigilance and courage, for his sake forbade the slaughter, and gave the command that everyone should save himself as best he could. Some who could swim at once leapt into the sea : others made the passage buoyed upon boards or on pieces of the wreck. In the end, every soul—sailor, soldier, passenger and prisoner—escaped safe to land. Paul had been a true prophet.

The condition of the shipwrecked was still miserable enough. They stood shivering on the shore without food or clothing, beneath a ceaseless rain, in an unknown land, ignorant if the inhabitants were friendly.

But they were soon reassured. The island proved to be Melita and the islanders showed themselves most hospitable. Their first work was to light a huge fire, and Paul, ready for the humblest as for the highest work, began to gather sticks. When he brought his bundle to the fire, a viper, awakened by the heat, fastened on his hand. The onlookers expected to see the poison take instant effect, and immediately thought the worst of him, whispering to one another that he must be a criminal, who, though he had escaped death by drowning, was not to be suffered by justice to live.

But Paul without a tremor shook the reptile into the fire. As they saw his unconcern and it became clear that he was quite uninjured, they leapt to the other extreme, concluding that he was a god. Soon another incident spread his fame. The chief man of the island, by name

Publius, lived close to the scene of the shipwreck and opened his house to relieve as many as possible of the sufferers, Paul among the others. Their host's father was lying hopelessly ill, and when Paul learned this, he went in to the sick man, and praying over him, restored him to health. The news spread like wildfire. Soon all the people in the island who were diseased sought his help, and God graciously gave him power to heal them all.

Three months Paul and his companions sojourned there. When the winter was over, and the centurion had led his prisoners on board another ship, by name "The Twin Brothers," they were sent away with many honours and loaded with gifts for use on shipboard. Paul had the power to attract these simple islanders as effectually as the much-travelled centurion.

And now the dangers of the voyage were over. The ship, well navigated, reached Italy, but Paul's spirits instead of rising, fell. Perhaps he was suffering from the terrible strain of that disastrous voyage, in which he had to be courage, hope and guidance for the whole ship's company.

Perhaps it was the thought of the great city, splendid and sinful, which daunted him, now that he was so near. Possibly he looked back to his old dream of coming to Rome as a free man, able to preach where and how he chose. Now he was a prisoner, with an uncertain fate before him, ignorant whether he would have any opportunities to preach at all.

But God who sent the angels to succour our Saviour after His agony, did not forget His servant. Not angels, but fellow-Christians, welcomed him as he set foot on the soil of Italy, and ere he entered the great city, certain of the believers [there, who had read and treasured his letter written to them some years before, met him with warm greeting and hearty friendship.

Thus Paul showed that the love of Jesus makes the true believer not less, but more of a man; not less fit for practical life, but more fit for it. He taught the centurion that there was a more lasting courage than the daring of the soldier, and the ship-captain that the wisdom gained by faith is more useful than the prudence gained by experience. He honoured

his Master in the storm and in the shipwreck, as he had honoured Him before the mob and in the prison. He ever trusted, and was therefore strong. He ever listened to the inward voice, and was therefore wise.

CHAPTER XXX.

PAUL'S LAST DAYS.

PAUL was treated very leniently in Rome, and was as comfortable as a prisoner could be. He was not confined in a dungeon, nor even in the camp of the soldiers, but had a lodging of his own. It is true that a soldier was constantly with him night and day, but his fetter was only a light chain, and he was allowed to see as many of his friends as he chose, and to preach in his own hired house to all who cared to come.

His first work was to send a message to the leading Jews in Rome, asking them to visit him. Although he had been so shamefully treated both by the leaders and by the people in Jerusalem, he still loved his nation passionately and longed to win his countrymen for his Lord. Besides, with the keen sensitiveness of a strictly upright

man, he wished to justify himself before the representatives of his nation, in case lying reports concerning him had been forwarded from Palestine.

The Jews of Rome met him very coldly. He explained the false charges brought against him, and how he had been driven to appeal to Cæsar, and with a characteristic gesture of his hands, holding up his chain, he cried, “For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with me: for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” They answered that he was mistaken in supposing that any letter or news of him had been received. In fact, they made plain that he seemed to them to think himself much more important than he really was.

But they added with great condescension, “We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.” There was very little hope of winning men so filled with prejudice, but Paul would not let slip the smallest opportunity.

Accordingly a time was fixed, and early in the day a large number of Jews came to his lodging.

The Apostle made one of his greatest efforts. Right on to the evening he sought to persuade them concerning Jesus, proving from the books of Moses and of the prophets that He was the Messiah. Some of them believed and some of them disbelieved, but they were all a little lukewarm and departed without any decision.

Paul's last word to them was one of warning. The terrible denunciation which Isaiah the prophet had thundered against Israel, Paul now hurled at his hearers, saying, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest haply they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and should turn again and God should heal them." His hearers remained unmoved. He parted from them in deep sadness, and this was his farewell: "Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear." This was the Apostle's final effort to win his own nation to its rightful Lord.

Two whole years he remained in Rome, while his trial dragged on, but he was fully occupied. His door was open to every enquirer, and he

preached the glad news to all who would hear. Strangely varied was the little audience that gathered day by day in his lodging. Sometimes servants and even high officials from the Emperor's household were there: sometimes slaves and broken men, who had fled to Rome to escape punishment. Two glimpses are given us of the work he did.

In his letter to the Philippians written from Rome he says, "All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Cæsar's household." Evidently there was quite a company of Christians within the palace of the Emperor Nero. There, right in the heart of the magnificence and sinful splendour of Rome, the name of Jesus was loved and honoured. And none of Paul's hearers in the great city were more ardent than these imperial officials and slaves.

The other side of the picture is given us in a beautiful letter written to one of his converts, Philemon, a well-to-do citizen of Colosse. Philemon owned a slave called Onesimus, who, having robbed his master, had fled to Rome, the sink into which all the dregs of the Empire tended to flow. Here he sank lower and lower, until

somehow he came under the influence of Paul, who had the joy of leading him to the Saviour of sinners. Onesimus could not show his gratitude sufficiently, and by many personal kindnesses sought to repay him who had saved his soul and given his torturing conscience peace.

But Paul would not let Onesimus remain with him. The convert's first duty was to go back to his master and seek his pardon. True, he would do this at the risk of his life, for a slave was entirely at his master's disposal, and if recaptured, might be tortured and killed in the most horrible fashion. Still the path of duty was plain, so Paul wrote a letter overflowing with love, in which he appealed, as "Paul the aged," on behalf of the runaway slave who had become so dear to him that he called him "my very heart."

There is a wonderful combination of common-sense and tenderness in the closing passage of this appeal. He writes: "If he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account; I, Paul, write it with mine own hand. I will repay it." But he adds: "I say

not unto thee how that thou owest to me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my heart in Christ."

During this imprisonment three letters were written to different churches; one to the Ephesians, one to the Colossians, and one to the Philippians. In the first of these we see how carefully the Apostle had studied his constant companion, the Roman soldier, for in its last chapter he gives a complete picture of the Christian warrior with all the weapons and armour of the spirit, exactly corresponding to the military dress and equipment. Girdle, breastplate, war shoes, shield, helmet, sword—all are represented.

We can imagine he had been listening to some of the stories of warfare in which the soldiers described how their troop had stood firm against the sudden onrush of their enemies, and though just able to hold their ground, had beaten them off; for he writes: "Take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand."

In the last of his letters, that to the Philippians, we learn that his trial is progressing satisfactorily. He writes: "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the good news, in that my bonds became a witness for Christ in the whole Prætorium, and to all the rest." The Prætorium appears to have been the name for the supreme Court in which the leading judges were the chief officers of the Imperial Guard. Paul here tells of the good impression which has already been made, and adds, "Most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident in my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." Clearly, the result of the trial thus far had been so favourable that the Christians were able to preach with less anxiety than for years before.

Paul's hopes were not disappointed. By the end of the year 61 A.D. he was once more a free man, and turned with renewed energy to his old work, speeding over land and sea on his Master's business. He was beginning to feel the weight of years and toils and sufferings, but he knew the time allowed him might be short, and he did not rest.

The time was indeed short. Within three years he was in prison once more, and this time he had no comforts, and there was no prospect of deliverance. His fellow-Christians were dismayed and scattered. When charged anew, no one in Rome took his part, but all forsook him. A terrible persecution under Nero, now a blood-stained monster, was about to begin.

In the second letter to Timothy, we get a last picture of the hero-Apostle. He is lonely, for his helpers have had to hasten to other churches to cheer and guide them. His garments are threadbare and he suffers from the cold, for he bids his friend bring the cloak that had been left at Troas. He is weary; there are no new thoughts in the letter, only the old great truths repeated as an old man would repeat them. He knows the end is near and that the way home is a path of blood, for he writes, "I am already being offered as a sacrifice." But he is at peace. The past is a good memory, for he has stood firm, and the future is lit with the brightness of the sunrise, for his Saviour and the amaranthine crown await him. He writes, "I have fought the good

fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day."

He had not long to wait. Before another year had closed, he was beheaded, and the soul of this chief soldier of the Cross passed into eternal peace.

He was the only Apostle who had been a persecutor, but he was the greatest of the disciples. He was also the only Apostle who had never shared the comradeship of Galilee, yet he was the greatest among the Lord's friends.

He has left us a precious legacy, for he has taught us that neither the mistakes of years nor the difficulty of piercing the Unseen need shut a man out from knowing the love of the Redeemer, and from sharing with those in His nearer presence the most intimate fellowship with the Lover of souls, for Paul wrote, and we all may be able to use his words :

" He loved me and gave himself for me."

" Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

" To depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

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